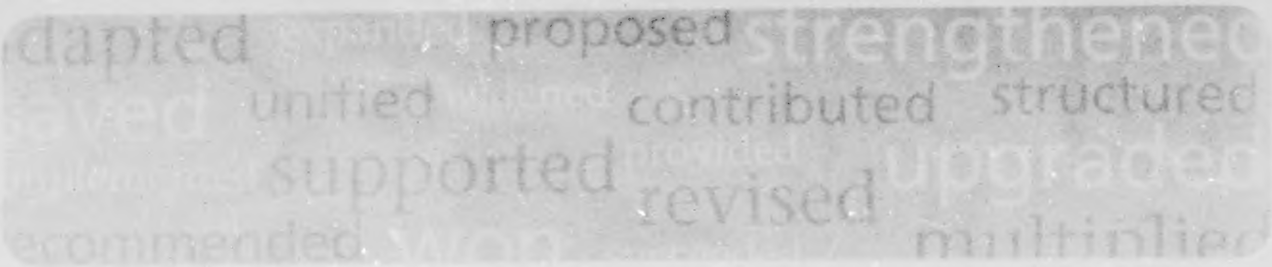
Advanced Techniques for Work Search

Alberta
HUMAN RESOURCES
AND EMPLOYMENT
the people
& workplace
department



Do you have full-time work experience, post-secondary education or a combination of both? Do you want to change your field of employment? Do you have lots of competition for the types of work you want? If your answer is "Yes" to any of these questions, this book is for you. You don't have to do all of the exercises in this workbook, or work from cover to cover to benefit from it. You may want to spend more time on some areas and less on others.

This workbook will help you:

- identify your employability skills
- update your work search tools and skills (résumé, portfolio, interview skills, proposals, cover letters, etc.)
- focus your search for work
- find relevant labour market information
- access other work search resources.

For copyright information, contact

Alberta Human Resources and Employment
People, Skills and Workplace Resources
6th Floor, 9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2V1
Telephone: (780) 422-1794 Fax: (780) 422-5319
E-mail: info@alis.gov.ab.ca

This information was accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. Labour market information and educational programs are subject to change, and you are encouraged to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education and employment decisions.

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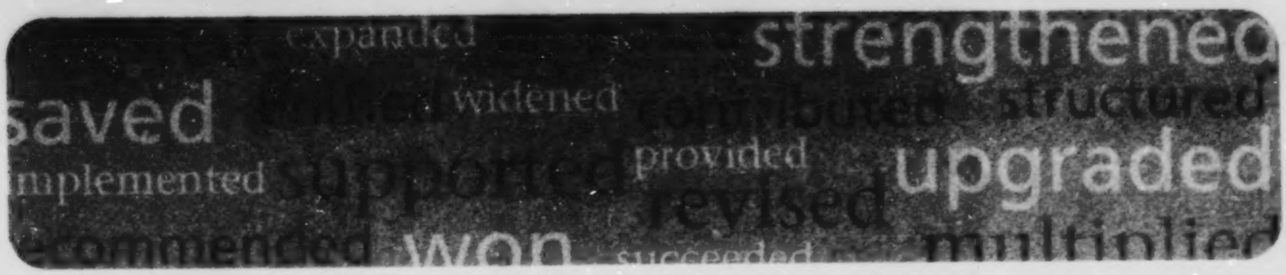

A 1993 video, titled *Job Search: The Product is You*, is available for use with this workbook. Although the style of the people portrayed in the video is somewhat dated, the messages they convey about the job search process remain current.

The video is about three people who are learning how to target their work search and market their skills.

- Lesley is a university graduate looking for her first professional position.
- Frank has just been laid off after twenty-two years of experience as a petroleum engineer.
- Azim is a recent immigrant who has eight years of teaching experience outside Canada.

The video illustrates some of the concepts described in this workbook, but viewing the video is not required to understand and apply them.

For additional copies of this book or to purchase a copy of the video, contact
Learning Resources Centre
12360 - 142 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5L 4X9
Telephone: (780) 427-5775
Fax: (780) 422-9750
Internet: www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop
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PART 1

PREPARING FOR A WORK SEARCH

To succeed in today's competitive and changing labour market, you need an up-to-date, creative job search strategy. This strategy will include:

- a clear picture of your skills
- the types of work and workplaces that require your skills
- information about the labour market and specific organizations
- effective work search tools such as résumés, cover letters, portfolios and interview skills
- the ability to learn from and handle rejection constructively
- the decision-making, communication and interpersonal skills required to negotiate the best possible deal when you are offered a job.

You also need determination, energy and confidence.

Looking for work involves selling a product (your skills and knowledge) to potential buyers (employers). Effective sales people:

- know their products, so they can emphasize product strengths and anticipate buyer resistance to product weaknesses
- target their sales efforts, so they don't waste time trying to sell products to people who are not likely to buy.

Therefore, the key to an effective job search is to **know what you have to offer and where your product is needed**. This means you have to be willing to invest time and energy in identifying your skills and doing the research required to find employers who need your skills. This workbook will help you do that.

You don't have to do all of the exercises in this workbook, or work from cover to cover to benefit from it. You may want to spend more time on some areas and less on others.

Your Thoughts at This Point

If any of the following statements describe your thoughts at this point, consider the following response.

I'll take any job I can get.

You are probably selling yourself short.

If you aren't looking for a specific type of work, you will find it very hard to sort through all the possibilities. In the long run, that will take more time, not less, and be a lot more frustrating. Targeting your search is much more effective than widely distributing hundreds of résumés that are not relevant to the people who receive them.

If you do not indicate what type of work you want to be considered for, employers won't know what kind of work you want either.

I'm only qualified for one type of work.

If you think you are only qualified to do what you have trained for and/or done in the past, you may be limiting your options unnecessarily.

Stop thinking in terms of job titles and start thinking about your skills. For example, teachers have communication skills, organizational skills, and leadership skills. Hairstylists must be skilled at making customers feel comfortable, marketing products, dealing with cash, and working efficiently. These skills are required in many types of work, not just teaching and hairstyling.

I know my skills and the kind of work I want.

You are way ahead of most job seekers! Go ahead and skip to Part 2: Résumés, Letters and Other Marketing Tools. If necessary, you can always come back to the exercises in Part 1 to help you prepare an effective résumé or get ready for interviews.

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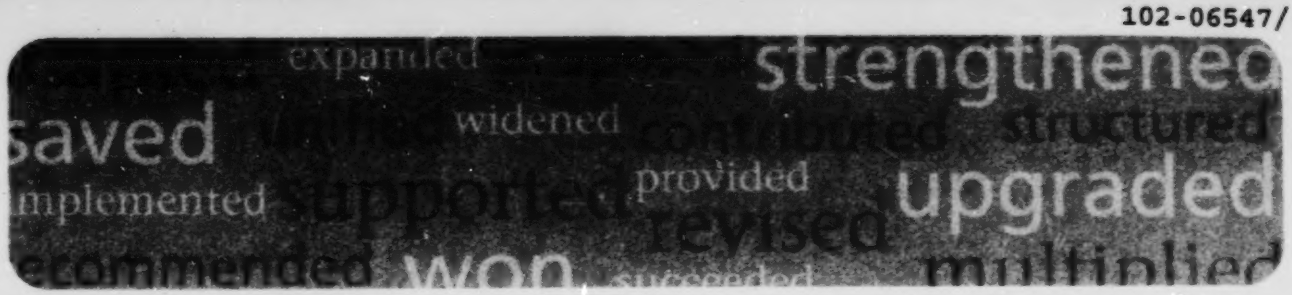

I have no idea what I want.

You are probably giving yourself less credit than you deserve. Try making a list of things you don't want to do. Then take each item on the list and rewrite it to state what you do want. For example, if you don't want to work shifts, say "I want to work regular week-day hours" or whatever is appropriate in your circumstances.

I hope there is an easy test I can take that will tell me what I should do.

You are not alone! Most of us would like to find an easy way to by-pass the self-assessment part of the job search. But only you can decide which types of work will:

- be interesting and meaningful for you
- pay well enough
- satisfy your other requirements (hours, location, benefits, organizational culture).

This book includes a number of self-assessment exercises. It also includes information about where you can find other interesting ways to learn more about yourself.

You Are a Unique Product

The most important element of a successful job search is self-confidence. How you feel about yourself shapes your expectations and behaviour, and how employers perceive you. When you expect rejection, you behave in ways that are likely to produce that result. But, if you have a positive attitude, you are more likely to be successful finding work.

You are unique. Nobody else has exactly the same combination of skills, interests and values. One of the things employers want to find out when they are reviewing applications and interviewing candidates is what makes you different from other applicants.

Part 1 of this workbook contains exercises that will help you build self-confidence by identifying what you have to offer, especially your non-technical skills. These exercises will also help you gather information you will need to write an impressive résumé (Part 2) and sell yourself in interviews (Part 3).

When employers are assessing you as an applicant they want to know if you have the technical skills required to perform the work. Then, they want to know how well you will be able to get along with others in the organization. In other words, employers want to know if you are emotionally competent as well as technically competent. Emotionally competent people:

- are aware of their feelings
- are able to control the way they respond to strong emotions (they don't throw temper tantrums, become paralyzed by fear or worry, or let enthusiasm overrule good sense)
- use emotional energy constructively (they use the energy generated by frustration to motivate them to do better next time)
- show empathy for others' feelings
- are aware of how their emotional reactions affect the feelings and behaviour of others, and express their feelings in ways that are constructive and helpful.

Many employers believe that emotional competence is a better predictor of success on the job than academic ability (IQ). Therefore, it is important to identify your non-technical skills as well as your technical ones.

VIDEO

In the opening segment of the *Job Search: The Product is You* video, job seekers Leslie, Frank and Azim express some common misgivings and frustrations. Minnie, who owns the café where the three meet, encourages them to do some self-assessment. They help one another recognize their skills and personal attributes, especially those that are marketable.

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attained
trouble-shot
increase
improved
maintained
completed
stimulate
utilized
introduced
established
simplified
solved
doubled
realized
opened

Skills inventory

A good way to start gathering information about your product is by identifying your skills. Even if you don't have a lot of work experience, you do have some of the skills employers are generally looking for in potential employees:

- personal skills
- teamwork skills
- fundamental skills.

You may also have work-specific skills that certain types of employers need. Work-specific skills are the ones people usually think of when asked, "what can you do?" For example, you may be able to operate a cash register, use a word-processing program, repair a diesel engine, or carry a tune. Work-specific skills are required to work in particular occupations (e.g. cashier, administrative assistant, heavy equipment technician, singer).

If you are looking for work that requires work-specific skills you already have, it makes sense to start your skills inventory with work-specific skills. List all of the things you can do that employers in your field need people to do. For example, if you can repair a diesel engine, list the things you have to be able to do and the equipment you have to know how to use. The longer and more detailed your list the better. But don't stop there! Employers in your field are also looking for the types of skills listed above (personal, teamwork, fundamental). Once you have identified your work-specific skills, do the following exercise to identify these other valuable skills.

If you don't have much work experience or would like to change occupations, start with the following exercise. It will help you identify skills you have developed at school, in your leisure pursuits and at work that you could use in a variety of work situations.

You probably have more skills than you give yourself credit for - we are usually our own worst critics. Ask people who know you well to help you with this exercise. Your friends, family and references would probably be happy to help with your work search. Don't be shy about asking for help!

Step 1

If others will be helping you with this exercise, make a photocopy of the following inventory for each person to complete individually.

Step 2

When you are doing this exercise yourself, check off all the skills in which you are competent (i.e. you perform as well as most people). You don't have to be an expert at it to check off a skill.

When you talk to others about this exercise, ask them to check off things you do as well as most people. Then compare your results to their results. By discussing any differences between your results and their results, you can learn a great deal about how you are perceived by others.

Step 3

After you have checked off all the skills in which you are competent, go back and highlight (or circle) the checked skills you *enjoy* using. These are skills you are good at *and* like to use, so they are skills you should emphasize when you are writing résumés and talking to employers.

Personal Skills

- ☐ feeling good about yourself – confident that you can make a positive contribution in work, school, family and leisure situations
- ☐ maintaining high ethical standards – dealing with people, problems and situations honestly
- ☐ giving credit where credit is due – recognizing your own and other people's good efforts
- ☐ taking care of your health – eating a balanced diet, getting enough rest and exercise, etc.
- ☐ managing addictions – admitting to any addictions you have, and getting help or treatment
- ☐ showing interest and initiative by getting involved in existing activities or starting new ones

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- ☐ organizing your work site – keeping your work area neat and clean, taking care of tools, materials and equipment
- ☐ planning and managing your time to achieve goals
- ☐ anticipating future financial needs, setting financial goals and deciding how you will manage your money (e.g. paying off credit cards at the end of each month, saving, investing)
- ☐ setting goals and priorities to balance your work and personal life
- ☐ following through with time and financial plans, and making adjustments when necessary
- ☐ risking, when appropriate – assessing, weighing and managing physical, emotional and financial risk
- ☐ accepting responsibility for your actions and the actions of your group
- ☐ being socially responsible and contributing to your community (e.g. obeying laws, volunteering)

- ☐ working alone or as part of a team
- ☐ working on several tasks or projects at the same time
- ☐ being innovative and resourceful (identifying and suggesting different ways to get work done)
- ☐ accepting change and using it to your advantage
- ☐ accepting feedback and learning from your mistakes
- ☐ coping with uncertainty (making decisions when you are not sure what the outcome will be)

- ☐ always learning and growing
- ☐ being aware of your personal strengths, and areas that need improvement or development

☐ setting your own learning goals instead of waiting for someone else to tell you what you should learn

☐ identifying and using learning opportunities and sources of learning

☐ planning for and achieving learning goals

☐ being aware of personal and group health and safety practices and procedures, and acting accordingly

☐ managing stress – knowing the causes of personal and professional stress, and coping with demands and pressures

Teamwork Skills

☐ getting along – demonstrating respect and caring about the feelings of others, being considerate

☐ using tact – being discrete and diplomatic, particularly when dealing with sensitive issues

☐ supporting – helping others with their problems, supporting others' decisions and initiatives

☐ accepting authority – being able to work under supervision

☐ respecting differences – appreciating diversity, accepting the uniqueness of individuals

☐ co-operating with others to accomplish shared goals

☐ clarifying the group's goals and objectives when necessary

☐ being flexible – respecting and being open to others' opinions and contributions

☐ stating opinions – having the confidence and assertiveness to say what you think

☐ accepting feedback without becoming angry or overly defensive

☐ contributing by sharing information and expertise

☐ leading, or supporting when appropriate, by motivating others to perform well

☐ confronting – telling others things they may not want to hear about their behaviour, habits, etc.

☐ doing your part – working to acceptable standards

☐ being timely – completing work on time to meet project deadlines, arriving at meetings on time, responding to messages reasonably quickly

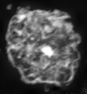
☐ determining priorities – deciding what is most important and doing that first

☐ scheduling – predicting how much time tasks will take, setting time frames for activities

☐ initiating – taking the first step, getting things started

☐ planning – developing projects or ideas through systematic preparation, and deciding in which order and at what time events will occur

☐ organizing – co-ordinating the people and resources necessary to put a plan into effect



☐ coaching – providing one-to-one or small group assistance to help others achieve a goal

☐ providing feedback – accurately describing an individual's work, behaviour, appearance, etc. in a helpful and considerate way

☐ making decisions – choosing a course of action and accepting responsibility for the consequences

☐ carrying out projects/tasks from start to finish with a clear idea of what you want to achieve

☐ selecting and using appropriate tools and technology

☐ reviewing how time has been used and making changes that will increase efficiency

☐ adapting to changing requirements and information

☐ keeping track of how well projects/tasks are progressing and looking for ways to improve

Fundamental Skills

☐ reading – getting information from written materials, following written instructions

☐ reading and understanding information presented in non-verbal formats (e.g. graphs, charts, diagrams)

☐ writing – using good grammar to write clear sentences and paragraphs, being able to express yourself/explain things in writing

☐ talking – being able to provide information effectively in ordinary settings

☐ public speaking – being able to keep the audience's attention while delivering a speech

☐ listening – paying attention to what other people say to understand and appreciate their points of view, and responding appropriately

☐ questioning – asking the right questions to obtain useful information, or to help others gain insight

☐ explaining – being careful and clear in what you tell people, so they understand quickly and easily

☐ resolving conflicts – bringing conflicts to successful conclusions

☐ persuading – convincing others to do what you want

☐ negotiating – bargaining with others to solve a problem or reach an agreement

☐ teaching – understanding group dynamics and instructing others

☐ chairing meetings – presiding over a group of people who come together for a purpose, listening, speaking, encouraging discussion, and following an agenda

☐ sharing information by using information and communications technologies (e.g. e-mail, voice mail)

☐ following directions – completing tasks as directed

☐ maintaining records of inventory, budgets or other information

- ☐ recording – using planners such as calendars and appointment books to keep track of activities
- ☐ organizing information – keeping orderly records (e.g. files, binders of information)
- ☐ filing – sorting information into an organized system
- ☐ scheduling – keeping track of projects, timetables, itineraries, etc.
- ☐ researching – locating and gathering information, using appropriate technology and information systems (e.g. computers, library classification systems, internet search engines)
- ☐ analyzing information – breaking it down to basic elements
- ☐ applying knowledge and skills from one or more disciplines (e.g. arts, languages, science, technology, math, social sciences, humanities)

- ☐ counting – determining how many items there are in a group
- ☐ calculating – using basic arithmetic: adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing
- ☐ measuring – using tools or equipment to determine length, angle, volume or weight
- ☐ estimating – judging the cost or size of things, predicting the outcome of an arithmetic problem before it is calculated, forecasting the cost of products and services
- ☐ budgeting – planning how you will spend money, deciding what to buy and how much to spend, or how to get the work done most cost-effectively
- ☐ deciding what needs to be measured or calculated
- ☐ observing and recording data, using appropriate methods, tools and technology

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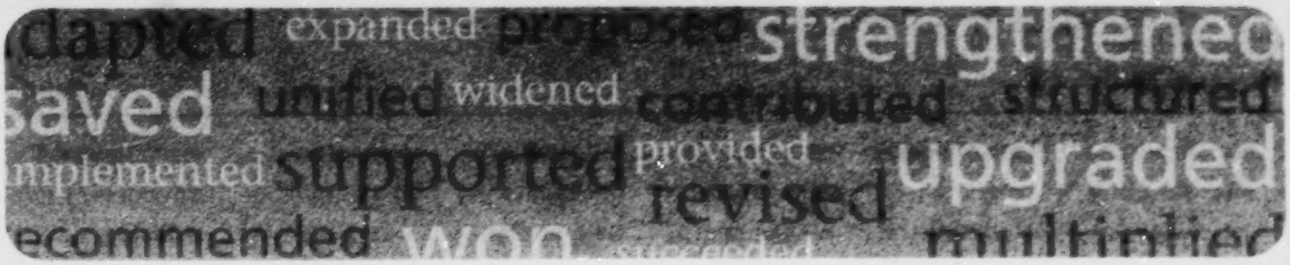
- ☐ assessing situations and identifying problems
- ☐ seeking different points of view and evaluating them based on facts
- ☐ recognizing that there are often several aspects to problems (e.g. human, technical, scientific)
- ☐ investigating – gathering information in an organized way to determine facts or principles
- ☐ analyzing – breaking concepts/problems into parts so each part can be examined
- ☐ being creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions
- ☐ using scientific, technological and mathematical ways of thinking to gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions
- ☐ evaluating solutions to make recommendations or decisions
- ☐ synthesizing – putting facts and ideas together in new and creative ways, finding new ways to look at problems and do things
- ☐ acting on your conclusions
- ☐ checking to see if a solution works, and taking opportunities to improve on it

The skills checklist is based on The Conference Board of Canada profile of Employability Skills 2000+. For more information, check out their website at [illegible]



Step 4

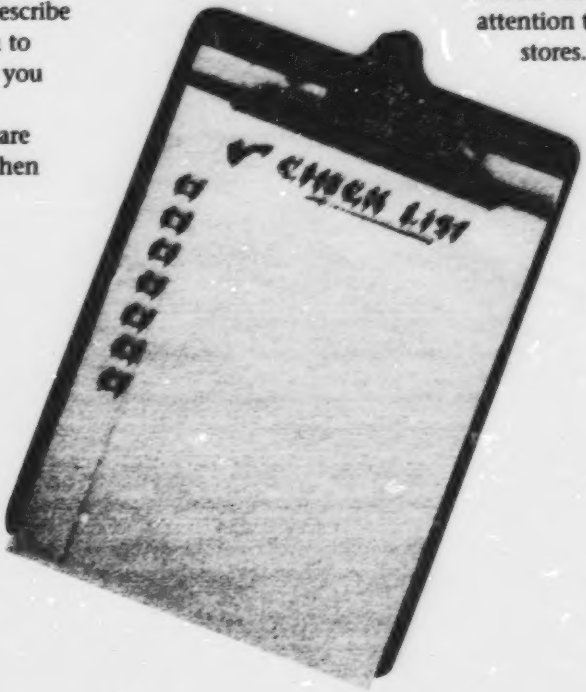
Create a personalized list of skills you enjoy using by translating the items you have highlighted (or circled) into words that describe your skills more specifically and accurately. The following lists of descriptive words are intended to give you some ideas. Use them as a starting place – don't limit yourself to just these words!

If you have any old job descriptions from work you have done in the past, check to see if they contain other descriptive words you can use. Or, pick out descriptive words used in *Occupational Profiles* (print version or on the Internet at www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo). Look for words that relate to work you have done in the past, and work you would like to do in the future.

After you have selected words that describe you and your skills, add information to make your description as detailed as you can. For each skill, ask yourself the questions journalists ask when they are writing stories: who, what, where, when and why. Based on your answers, describe each of your skills as concisely as possible.

Examples:

- If you enjoy teaching, ask yourself who you teach, what you teach, where you teach, when you teach and why you teach. You might say "teaching inexperienced construction workers about how to use power tools safely, so they won't get hurt". Someone else might say "refereeing basketball games at the local gym, so young people have a place to go other than the streets" or "mentoring younger employees to help them get ahead and benefit the organization at the same time".
- If you would describe yourself as "imaginative," ask yourself what you are imaginative about, who you are with when you are imaginative, and where, when and why you are imaginative. You might say "I create imaginative displays to draw attention to specific products in retail stores." Someone else might say "I am good at taking three-dimensional objects apart in my head to design patterns" or "I imagine how different scenarios will play out before I deliver a motivational speech."



Personal Skills

- accepting
- accurate
- achieving
- active
- adaptable
- adventurous
- affectionate
- alert
- ambitious
- amiable
- analytical
- articulate
- assertive
- attractive
- broad-minded
- business-like
- calm
- capable
- careful
- caring
- cautious
- charismatic
- charitable
- charming
- cheerful
- clever
- committed
- compassionate
- competent
- competitive
- confident
- congenial
- conscientious
- conservative
- considerate
- consistent
- constructive
- co-operative
- courageous
- creative
- curious
- daring
- decisive
- dedicated
- dependable
- determined
- disciplined
- discreet
- distinctive
- dynamic
- easy-going
- efficient
- empathetic
- encouraging
- energetic
- enterprising
- entertaining
- enthusiastic
- expressive
- fair-minded
- flexible
- forceful
- formal
- frank
- friendly
- gentle
- generous
- genuine
- good-natured
- graceful
- happy
- hard-working
- healthy
- helpful
- honest
- humorous
- imaginative
- independent
- industrious
- informal
- innovative
- insightful
- intelligent
- introspective
- intuitive
- kind
- knowledgeable
- light-hearted
- likeable
- logical
- loving
- loyal
- mature
- meticulous
- modest
- motivated
- objective
- obliging
- open-minded
- optimistic
- orderly
- organized
- original
- outgoing
- patient
- people-oriented
- perceptive
- persistent
- persuasive
- pleasant
- poised
- positive
- practical
- precise
- productive
- professional
- progressive
- prudent
- punctual
- quick
- quick-witted
- quiet
- rational
- realistic
- reassuring
- receptive
- reliable
- resourceful
- responsible
- responsive
- self-aware
- self-confident
- self-reliant
- sensitive
- serious
- service-oriented
- sincere
- skillful
- smart
- sociable
- sophisticated
- spontaneous
- stable
- steady
- stimulating
- strong
- supportive
- sympathetic
- systematic
- tactful
- talented
- thorough
- thoughtful
- tolerant
- trusting
- trustworthy
- truthful
- unique
- unpretentious
- versatile
- vigorous
- warm

Teamwork Skills

- administering
- assisting
- coaching
- conducting
- consulting
- controlling
- co-operating
- co-ordinating
- counselling
- deciding
- demonstrating
- directing
- enforcing
- facilitating
- helping
- influencing
- initiating
- inspiring
- instructing
- leading
- managing
- motivating
- negotiating
- planning
- recognizing
- reinforcing
- rewarding
- serving
- starting
- supervising
- teaching
- training

Fundamental Skills

- advising
- analyzing
- arranging
- assessing
- budgeting
- calculating
- checking
- communicating
- counselling
- creating
- demonstrating
- designing
- developing
- devising
- evaluating
- generating
- improvising
- inspecting
- interpreting
- inventing
- investigating
- memorizing
- negotiating
- ordering
- organizing
- originating
- performing
- persuading
- predicting
- presenting
- producing
- promoting
- reading
- researching
- reviewing
- scheduling
- selecting
- summarizing
- synthesizing
- talking
- translating
- verifying
- writing

Record your skills here:

VIDEO

Frank has experience in project management. He might start a skills inventory with words such as co-ordinating, coaching, training, providing feedback, presenting, fundraising, influencing others, negotiating, designing (policy and procedures), and writing (proposals). He might describe himself as organized, motivated, enthusiastic, supportive, determined, resourceful, perceptive, creative, loyal, trustworthy, energetic, committed and positive.

Leslie has lots of work-specific knowledge and skills as a new MBA graduate, but she believes she is at a disadvantage because others applying for the same work have experience in the health care field. She must realize that she is selling knowledge, skills and abilities (no matter where they were acquired), not a university degree with no experience. There is a big difference! When Leslie does a skills inventory and analysis of her past accomplishments, she discovers many demonstrated competencies that she can market successfully.

Azim has post-secondary education and experience as a teacher, but his credentials are not recognized in Canada. To market himself based on his demonstrated competencies, he has to look for opportunities to apply his teaching, coaching and motivating skills in ways he has not previously considered.

Skills assessment

This exercise will help you:

- identify your strongest skills
- decide which skills need improving.

For each of the following skills, rate your current competency level on a scale of 1 (lowest skill level) to 5 (highest skill level). Check off skills you would like to improve.

[illegible]	Level (1 - 5)	Want to improve
Speaking – Ability to express yourself effectively in individual and group situations.		
Listening – Ability to listen actively for messages and feelings and to pick out important information in verbal communications.		
Writing – Ability to express ideas in a clear, concise, grammatically correct and interesting manner.		
Reading – Ability to acquire facts and understand the meaning of written communications.		
Analyzing situations – Ability to identify the key elements of a situation, and the information required to resolve problems.		
Analyzing information – Ability to interpret available information about a situation, concept or problem.		
Judgement – Ability to effectively evaluate situations and information, and reach logical conclusions.		
Decisiveness – Readiness to make decisions.		
Planning and organizing – Ability to effectively plan and organize your own work, and to direct and assist others in planning and organizing their work.		

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Decisiveness – Readiness to make decisions.		
Planning and organizing – Ability to effectively plan and organize your own work, and to direct and assist others in planning and organizing their work.		

	Level (1 - 5)	Want to Improve
Delegating – Ability to delegate tasks clearly and effectively while encouraging input and efficiency from subordinates, and promoting their development.		
Developing staff – Ability to develop staff by coaching, training, role-modelling, mentoring and supporting.		
Negotiating – Ability to successfully reach agreement with others in a manner that supports the best interests of the organization, and reflects respect for and interest in other people in the organization.		
Controlling – Ability to use administrative controls effectively to monitor and assess activities.		
Leadership – Ability to motivate a group or individual to effectively accomplish a task.		
Flexibility – Ability to modify your own approach and behaviour as needed.		
Interpersonal sensitivity – Awareness and consideration of the needs and feelings of others.		
Initiative – Ability to motivate yourself to take positive action.		
Creativity – Ability to generate imaginative solutions for problem situations.		

	Level (1 - 5)	Want to Improve
Enthusiasm – Ability to maintain a positive outlook and a positive approach to problem solving and to demonstrate interest and commitment.		
Energy – Ability to approach your work activities with vigour, action and interest.		
Co-operativeness – Ability to work effectively with others and respect differences.		
Reliability – Ability to attend work regularly, be punctual, follow through on commitments and meet deadlines.		
Self-development – Ability to continuously develop skills to become more effective, and obtain feedback for further development.		
Regard for others – Ability to respect the work and dignity of others regardless of nationality, religion, age, sex, marital status, or other differences.		
Stress management – Ability to manage work and cope effectively with situations; maintaining a life/work balance through effective use of leisure.		

attained
trouble-shot
increase
improved
completed
established
utilized
introduced
simplified
solved
doubled

There are many ways to develop skills you marked Want to Improve:

- read a book
- listen to audio cassette tapes on the subject
- talk to experts
- do volunteer work that involves developing and using these skills
- look for related information on the Internet
- ask people you respect for ideas and suggestions
- attend a workshop, seminar or course (in person or by distance education)
- join a support group
- borrow a video from the library
- start practising regularly.

Why wait until you have found new work? Commit to starting today, and set time limits for achieving your skill improvement goals. Choose ways of improving your skills that suit your needs and learning style.

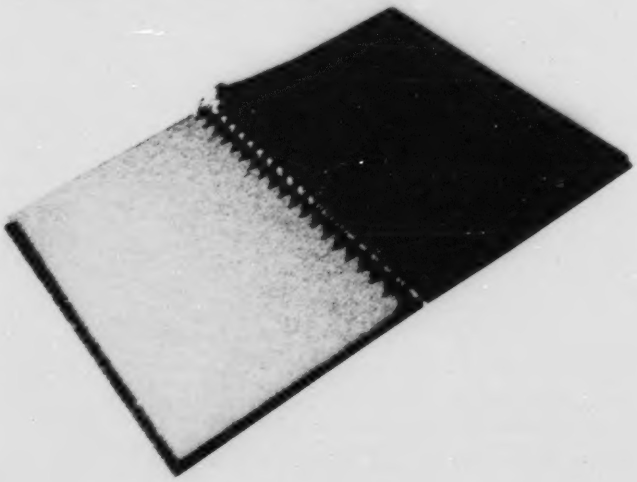
Record your self-improvement plans here:

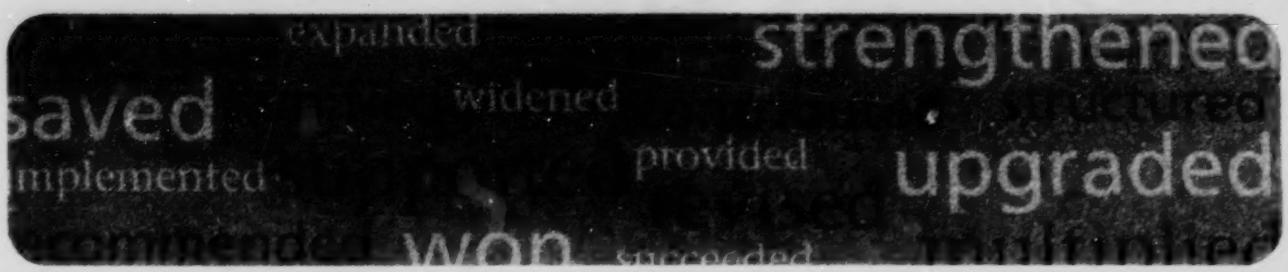
Results achieved

It is not enough to simply tell employers what you have done in the past. They want to know how well you did it, and what happened as a result. What contributions have you made in teamwork situations? What have you accomplished on your own?

This exercise will help you:

- remember the results you have achieved
- develop outstanding résumés and cover letters
- prepare for job interviews
- target your work search.





Brainstorm a list of all the things you have done that gave you a sense of accomplishment. Don't stop to question or analyze, write down anything that pops into your head. Your accomplishments don't have to be major achievements – just things you have done and were happy with the results. For example, have you made, repaired or restored something? Organized a successful event? Overcome obstacles or set-backs to achieve personal or work-related goals? Contributed to the success of a project or program as a volunteer?

Work-related accomplishments and contributions are sometimes harder to remember than personal ones. They are often part of your job and therefore may not feel like "accomplishments" to you. List them anyway, even if you received little or no recognition for them. For example, if you have done any of the following, they should be on your list of accomplishments:

- improved a work area, or the way work was done
- contributed to productivity and morale as part of a work team/group
- suggested ways to improve efficiency or effectiveness
- received positive feedback from customers and/or co-workers
- received positive feedback/recognition from an employer (e.g. good performance evaluations, letters of appreciation, informal feedback during meetings)
- improved an organization's bottom line by increasing revenue and/or decreasing costs.

The more accomplishments you can think of the better, whether they are work-related or not. List at least ten. If considering your whole life would make your list way too long, just think about the last few years.

Make up a title for each of the ten most recent accomplishments that are work-related (for example: Increased sales by 20%). Then briefly describe the obstacles or barriers you had to overcome, the skills you used, what motivated you, and what happened as a result of your efforts. Where possible, use numbers to describe your results. Don't forget to mention any feedback or recognition you received.

VIDEO

Frank recalls persuading corporate donors to increase their donations to the ballet by 48 per cent over the previous year. Putting a number on how much he increased corporate donations is much more impressive than simply saying that he persuaded more corporations to donate.

The following words may help you to describe your results.

adapted
attained
completed
contributed
decreased (lowered)
doubled (tripled)
eliminated
established
expanded
implemented
improved
increased (raised)
introduced
maintained
multiplied
opened
proposed
provided (furnished)
realized
recommended
reduced (cut)
revamped
revised
revitalized
risked
saved
simplified
sold
solved
stimulated
streamlined
strengthened
structured
succeeded
supported
transferred
trouble-shot
uncovered
unified
upgraded
utilized
widened
won

trouble-shot
increased
improved
completed
established
introduced
simplified
solved
doubled

Accomplishment

Obstacles/barriers overcome:

Skills used:

Motivation/need:

Results/satisfaction gained/benefits:

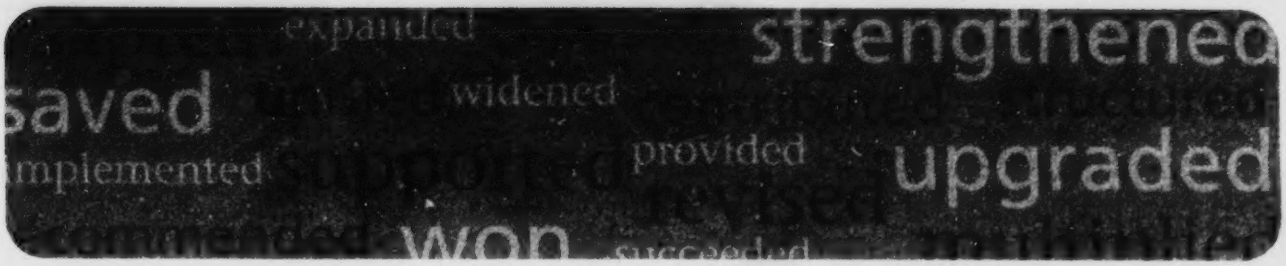
Accomplishment

Obstacles/barriers overcome:

Skills used:

Motivation/need:

Results/satisfaction gained/benefits:


expanded
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upgraded
revised
won
succeeded

Accomplishment

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Obstacles/barriers overcome: ______________

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Skills used: ______________________________

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Motivation/need: __________________________

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Results/satisfaction gained/benefits: __________

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Accomplishment

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Obstacles/barriers overcome: ______________

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Skills used: ______________________________

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Motivation/need: __________________________

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Results/satisfaction gained/benefits: __________

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____

____

trouble-shot
increased
improved
completed
established
utilized
introduced
simplified
doubled

The more accomplishments you describe, the more likely you are to see patterns emerging.

- Have many of your accomplishments involved using similar skills or addressing similar needs?
- Were you usually working alone or with others?
- What was most satisfying or rewarding?
- What was the real pay-off for you?

Your "success patterns" are links between what you do well, what you enjoy doing, and what you find rewarding. They are strong indicators of your interests and values.

Most of us are more successful, committed and "promotable" when our work allows us to use the skills that we enjoy using *and* come easiest to us. Therefore, it makes sense to look for work that is interesting and meaningful to you, and requires using your strongest skills. If your success patterns indicate that you work best under certain conditions, add those conditions to your work target Wish List.

If what you really like to do is not a realistic work target right now, keep it in the back of your mind anyway. Continue to develop your skills through leisure/recreational activities or volunteer work. In the future, keep your eyes open for opportunities to get paid for using the skills you enjoy using most.

If you need more help identifying your skills and accomplishments, check out the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website www.alis.gov.ab.ca, or call the Career Information Hotline toll free from anywhere in Alberta by dialing 1-800-661-3753 (in Edmonton, call 422-4266). Hotline advisors can provide advice as well as direct you to other services offered at Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres located throughout the province.

Your Target

To get what you want, you have to know what you want. Some of your preferences may be obvious to you (e.g. a minimum level of income). Others may take some thought to put into words.

Getting a clear picture of what you want requires answering the question: "What makes some types of work more appealing to me than others?" The exercises in this section will help you to identify your:

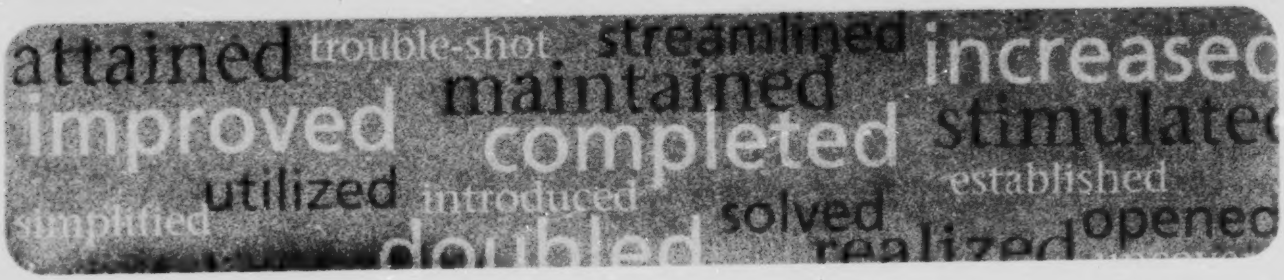
- overall wants and needs
- preferences regarding work culture
- preferences regarding management style.

After completing these exercises, you will have a Wish List that describes the ideal work situation for you. The more detail you can put into your wish list, the easier it will be to decide where you should be looking for work opportunities.

Wants and needs

Based on your work and life experiences to date, what are your preferences regarding each of the following? Be as specific as you can.

	Don't want	Need/Want
1. Geographic location		
2. Hours of work (e.g. working standard weekday hours, shifts, overtime)		
3. Pay		
4. Size/type of organization		
5. Equipment/tools/ furniture		
6. Co-workers		
7. Supervisors		
8. Vacations		
9. Other benefits		
10. Nature of the work		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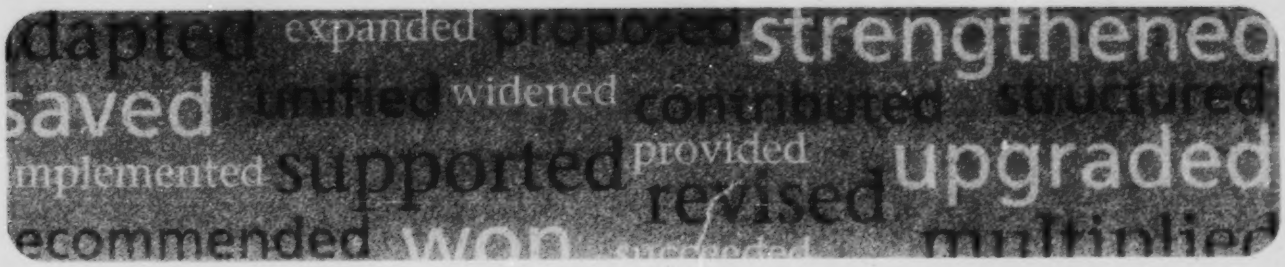
realized

	Don't want	Need/Want
11. Challenge		
12. Variety		
13. Being part of a team		
14. Accomplishment		
15. Opportunities to learn and/or advance		
16. Responsibility		
17. Input in decision-making		
18. Recognition		
19. Status		
20. Opportunities to influence, coach and develop others		



Each Don't want and Need/Want limits the number of work opportunities open to you. Limiting your options can help focus your search, but don't limit yourself too much! For each of the above items, ask yourself if you are limiting your search unnecessarily.

Examples

- If you said you don't want to work for less than a certain amount, do you really need that level of income? Are there ways you could cut back on your spending? If you got a job that offers health care and pension benefits, would you be able to accept a lower rate of pay without lowering your standard of living?
- If relocating could dramatically increase your chances of finding work, are you willing to move to find suitable employment?

The first ten items on the list are external values. If a work opportunity does not meet these needs/wants, you probably would not find the work satisfying. However, meeting these needs/wants does not guarantee that you *will* be satisfied with the work itself. For example, work you dislike doesn't suddenly become more enjoyable if you get a pay raise.

The last ten items are internal values that influence feelings of job satisfaction. The better the match between your internal values and your work, the happier you will be with your work. Since you spend a great deal of time at work, your level of job satisfaction has a big impact on how good you feel about your whole life.

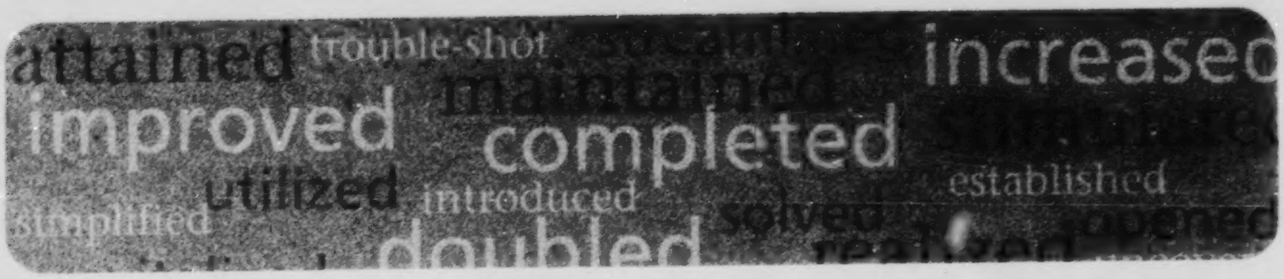
To further clarify your wants and needs, try some of the exercises on the next few pages.

Your priorities

To feel fulfilled, you *must* satisfy your needs. If you cannot satisfy them through your work, you will have to look for other ways to satisfy them. Wants are desires, not essential needs. This exercise will help you separate your needs from your wants.

Review the following list of values. Use the additional spaces to add anything else that is important to you. Check off the ten values that are most important to you, and number them in order of importance.

☐ economic security
☐ stimulating environment
☐ knowledge/learning
☐ recognition of supervisors
☐ recognition by the general public



☐ recognition by friends

☐ pleasant location

☐ variety in the job

☐ opportunities for growth

☐ maximum use of abilities

☐ independence

☐ time for self or family

☐ achievement

☐ opportunity to contribute to society

☐ supervising others

☐ influence over policy

☐ adventure

☐ money

☐ travel

☐ creativity

☐ ____________________________________

____

☐ ____________________________________

____

☐ ____________________________________

____

☐ ____________________________________

____

The clearer you are about your needs, the better you will be able to target your work search. List your most important needs first on your work target Wish List.

Employer-employee relationships are changing. Employers – public and private, large and small – are always looking for ways to get work done as cost-effectively as possible. As a result, more and more employers are offering non-traditional work arrangements such as part-time jobs, casual work, temporary assignments and seasonal employment. They are also contracting work out to firms and individuals.

This trend will continue, so it is important to be as flexible as possible when you are looking for work. Consider the following questions carefully.

Do your priorities lend themselves to the possibility of working on a part-time, casual, temporary, seasonal or project basis?

Many employers select permanent and full-time employees from a pool of people who are already working for the company part-time or on a casual (on-call) basis. That way, their decisions are based on first-hand knowledge of candidates' attitudes and capabilities.

Do your skills lend themselves to self-employment?

If so, another possibility is to do contract work for a number of employers. Contract work is often project-based – you agree to complete a project by a certain date in return for a flat fee or an hourly fee.

If you choose to accept a non-traditional work arrangement, you can continue to:

- use and develop your skills
- meet and interview people who are knowledgeable about your employment field
- check out other employers and look for employment leads.

Work culture preferences

Every organization has its own work culture. If your values and beliefs correspond with values and beliefs held by most people in an organization, you are more likely to enjoy working there. The following exercise will help you to identify characteristics to look for in potential employers.

Read each statement and check the column that is appropriate for you.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Organization's mission is clearly understood by all employees.			
Employees have a strong sense of loyalty to the organization.			
The organization does what it says it will do.			
Employees consistently interact in positive ways.			
The organization balances its needs with employee needs.			
Management practices are consistent and predictable.			
The organization supports and develops good leaders.			
The organization has a high retention rate of good people.			
Employees communicate regularly and effectively.			
Developmental feedback is provided at all levels in the organization.			
Creativity and innovation are rewarded.			
The organization encourages employee input.			
People are treated fairly and with respect.			
The organization treats employees as its greatest asset.			
Employees are involved in decision-making.			
The organization follows up and responds to employee input.			
Physical facilities are attractive and conducive to productivity.			
The organization encourages and fosters learning.			
Salaries are compatible with levels of responsibility.			
Salaries are consistent with the marketplace.			
Employment and compensation practices demonstrate equal opportunity.			
Fringe benefits are comparable to other organizations' benefits.			
Individual contributions are recognized (pay for performance).			
The organization is committed to employee development.			

Rank your "very importants" in order of priority, and add them to your work target Wish List.

Management style preferences

A good working relationship with your supervisor is essential for job satisfaction and career advancement. This exercise will help you identify characteristics to look for in potential supervisors and managers.

Check the column that represents the degree of importance you attach to each desirable behaviour listed below.

I work most effectively for a supervisor who:	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
• is fair with everyone			
• is technically knowledgeable and competent			
• delegates work, stating objectives and time-line requirements clearly			
• delegates the necessary authority as well as responsibility			
• gives me a fair degree of control and autonomy			
• provides necessary training and development			
• encourages creativity			
• is available when I need to discuss a problem			
• is decisive			
• gives credit for good work			
• provides constructive feedback on an ongoing basis			
• backs up her/his staff when needed			
• is friendly and acknowledges team members daily			
• criticizes the problem behaviour, not me, when my performance is a problem			
• has realistic expectations of me			
• keeps the work team informed regarding the organization's challenges/expectations			
• approaches goal-setting as a shared process			
• compensates team members fairly and equitably			
• holds regular performance reviews			
• fosters my career development			
• helps me learn from my mistakes			
• is a positive role model			
• is an inspiring coach			
• is honest and operates with integrity			

Rank your "very importants" in order of priority, and add them to your work target Wish List.

expanded
strengthened
widened
provided
upgraded
revised

WISH LIST

Needs:

Management style preferences:

Work culture preferences:

Wants:

trouble-shot
increased
improved
completed
established
introduced
simplified
doubled

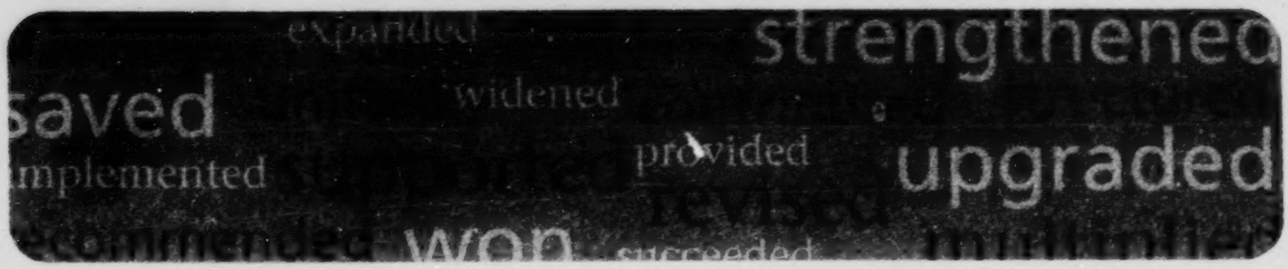
Potential targets

When you target your work search, you are more likely to hit the bull's-eye and get what you want. Think about the types of working environments in which you work best. For example, do you prefer:

- large, medium or small organizations?
- formal or informal working environments?
- working primarily indoors or outdoors?
- urban, rural or industrial settings?
- standard hours of work or shifts that give you time off when you need it?
- staying close to home or travelling often?
- high pressure, tight time lines and variety; or structure, routine, slower pace and stability?

Describe the type of working environment you want and ask family, friends and previous work associates for suggestions. List *all* of their ideas. At this stage, you are exploring options. Later, you can select the ones that are most appealing to you – the organizations you want to target.

Organization	Website Address	Mailing Address	Phone Number



If the types of organizations you want to work for are not obvious from your wish list, you may need to do some career planning before you are ready to start looking for work.

- If you would like to talk to a career advisor, call the Career Information Hotline toll free from anywhere in Alberta by dialing 1-800-661-3753 (in Edmonton, call 422-4266).
- If you would like to talk to a career advisor in person, visit the nearest Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre. To find the nearest centre, call the Career Information Hotline. Check out the work search resources they may have as well. Or talk to a counsellor at a school or post-secondary institution.
- Check out the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website www.alis.gov.ab.ca. If you don't have access to the Internet at home or school, use the public access computers at your local public library or Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre.

Generating Leads

Once you have a good idea of what you have to offer and what you want, you need to figure out which employers need your skills and where you would like to work.

Although you may feel lost in unfamiliar territory at this point, you are not without resources to guide you. There are a number of ways to identify potential employers and find out more about them.

Local newspapers, news broadcasts and documentaries

are excellent sources of information about current labour market trends and conditions. Use them to learn as much as you can about:

- your local labour market
- what is happening in other places (if you are willing to relocate for employment)
- how conditions are expected to change in the foreseeable future.

Practically every part of a newspaper or news broadcast can be "mined" for labour market information. For example, when you see an article about a local company developing a new product, think about the effects that could have on the local labour market.

- The company might soon be looking for people to help produce, distribute and/or sell its new product (e.g. production line workers, warehousing technicians, sales representatives).
- If the company is expanding, it may also be looking for other types of workers (e.g. administrative assistants, accountants, business management consultants, network administrators, purchasing agents).
- Producing the new product will require raw materials. This may mean that local suppliers and/or distributors could be expanding in the near future too.

Even front-page news stories can be a source of employment-related information. For example, an unemployed auto-body mechanic got a great idea when a hailstorm hit and hundreds of cars were damaged. He approached a large, established firm and proposed an aggressive program promoting the firm's quality bodywork and fast turnaround. He increased sales for the company and created a job for himself.

Of course, the classified and career ads are also a useful source of job leads, although they have two disadvantages:

- competition for advertised positions is often keen because these opportunities are so easy to find
- unless there is a specified competition deadline, advertised positions are filled very quickly (often within 24 hours)

attained
trouble-shot
increased
improved
completed
established
utilized
introduced
simplified
solved
doubled

Despite these disadvantages, you can make good use of current and older classified and career ads by using them to identify employers in your field. They may have unadvertised job openings in other areas. Use the contact information in the ad to send them an unsolicited résumé.

Telephone directories

are essentially listings of local employers. All you have to do is use the Blue Pages and the Yellow Pages index. For example, a social worker might look under Yellow Pages categories such as "social service organizations," "social workers" and "hospitals" as well as looking in the Blue Pages directory to find listings of government agencies.

Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres

offer a variety of career and employment services, including workshops, work search resources and public access to the Internet. To find out where the nearest service centre is located, call the Career Information Hotline toll free from anywhere in Alberta at 1-800-661-3753 (in Edmonton, call 422-4266).

Most service centres have electronic kiosks where you can find the same job leads that are posted on the Internet www.jobbank.gc.ca. Many also have information collections that include a wide variety of job search resources. Be sure to check out these free services and resources.

Your local public library

has a variety of resources that can be invaluable sources of information for work searchers. For example, most public libraries have directories of community services, businesses and manufacturing firms. These directories list employers, often by region, and include contact information (e.g. mailing addresses, telephone numbers, website addresses). Some directories also provide a description of each organization's services and products, and the names of key people in the organization.

Your public library may also have:

- labour market information published by federal, provincial and/or local government agencies (e.g. Statistics Canada, provincial and municipal economic development departments)
- information published by the local Chamber of Commerce and other business and professional organizations
- business magazines related to the industries and employment fields that interest you
- the annual reports of major employers in your area
- other work search resources (e.g. books with dozens of sample résumés and videos about job interview techniques).

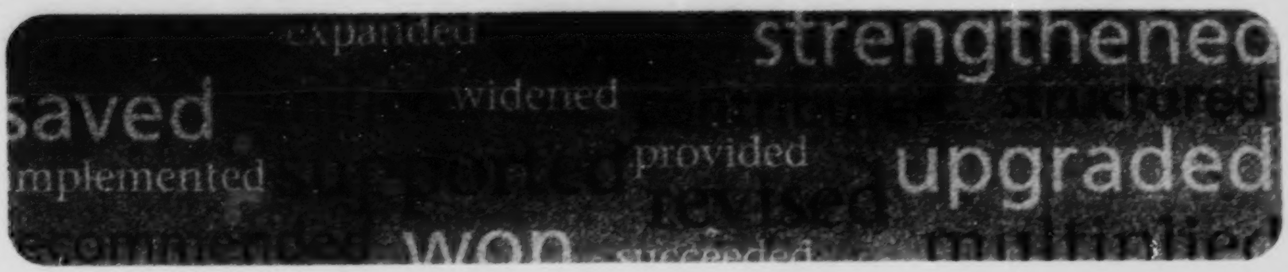
The more you learn about work search strategies and the employers and industries that interest you, the better equipped you will be to find interesting opportunities, write effective résumés and cover letters, and respond to interview questions.

The Internet

is loaded with information that is at your fingertips 24 hours a day. But unless you are in a high tech line of work, think of surfing the Internet as just one more way to gather information. In general, other work search strategies are still more effective than using job search websites that post résumés and/or job openings.

You don't have to have your own computer, modem and Internet connection to access the Internet. Most public libraries and Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres offer free access to the Internet. "Cyber cafes" also provide Internet access, but you may have to pay a fee for the time you are on-line.

The Internet is a particularly good source of information about potential employers. Organizations' websites



usually provide information about products and services and the organization itself, and may include much more (e.g. the organization's mission statement and objectives, names and e-mail addresses for key contacts). This is helpful not only when you are looking for organizations you might want to work for, but also when you are applying for advertised positions. Your knowledge about the employer should be evident in the way you write your cover letter and résumé, and the way you answer questions in job interviews.

Posting your résumé on job search sites and responding to Internet job postings may or may not be a good use of your time. Before you spend a lot of time looking at job search websites on the Internet (there are a great many of them!), ask yourself the following questions.

- Do many employers in the fields that interest you use the Internet to advertise the type of work opportunities you are seeking? If you are not sure, you can use
  - search engines to find websites that mention relevant job titles, and/or
  - gateway websites such as the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website www.alis.gov.ab.ca that have links to a wide variety of employment-related websites.

  If you don't find many job postings for the type of work you want, your time and energy would probably be better spent on other work search strategies.
- Are you willing to relocate, or interested in working at home for an organization that is located elsewhere? If not, concentrate your efforts on other work search strategies. Unless you find a local or regional job search website that has interesting-looking job postings, most of the leads you find on the Internet will be for work located elsewhere.

You don't have to look for job postings yourself. You can subscribe to mailing services that send you postings of jobs as they come on-line, but don't be fooled into thinking that subscribing to listservs will do all the work for you. They are just one of the tools you can use to find employment opportunities.

Personnel/placement agencies

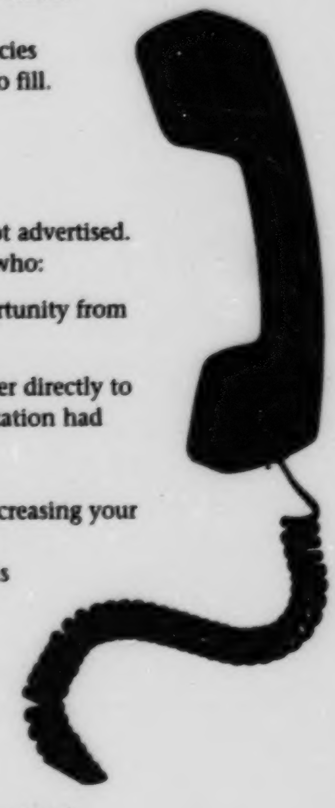
are private employment agencies. If you find an agency that specializes in placing people who have qualifications similar to yours, go ahead and submit an application. But don't count on an agency to find work for you! Personnel agencies are not in the business of finding jobs for people. They are in the business of finding suitable employees for their clients (employers). For each successful referral, employers pay a fee. Agencies only refer people whose qualifications match the requirements of the vacancies they are currently trying to fill.

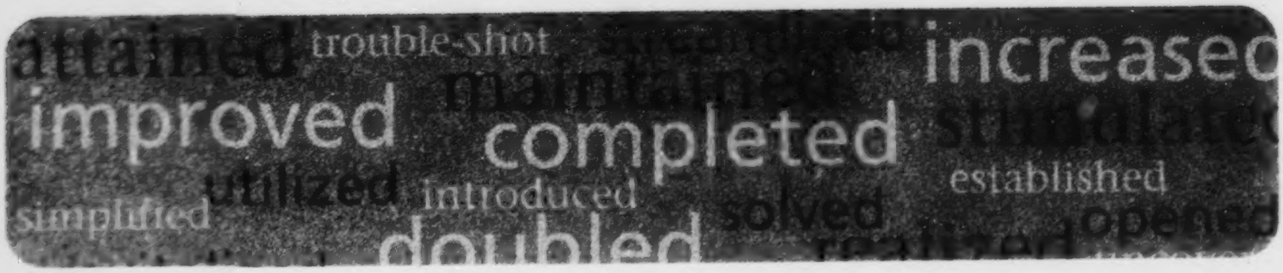
Networking

Most jobs openings are not advertised. They are filled by people who:

- heard about the opportunity from someone else, or
- contacted the employer directly to find out if the organization had an opening.

Networking is a way of increasing your chances of hearing about suitable opportunities. It is a process of making connections, from the people you know to the people they know, to form a "net" of personal contacts. There are several ways to build and extend your current network.





Tell everyone you know that you are looking for work, and ask for ideas

Write your name in big letters in the middle of a blank page. Around it, quickly jot down the names of your friends and relatives. Further away from your name, write the names of other people you know.

All of the people you list have contacts of their own, many of whom you have never met. You can extend your network quite dramatically by asking the people you know to refer you to people they know.

Phone several of your friends, relatives and acquaintances each day. Start with people in your inner circle – people you know well and are comfortable talking to. As you gain experience making networking calls and get better at it, start calling acquaintances you have listed closer to the edges of the page.

When you are talking to people you know (on the phone or in person), describe the type(s) of work and organizations that interest you. Ask for ideas. If they haven't heard of any suitable work opportunities lately, they may have heard that a particular organization is good to work for, or they may know someone else who might have heard about suitable job openings. Keep gathering information, and asking for referrals to others who may have more information.

Phone the people you are referred to

Be business-like and get right to the point. After saying "hello" and identifying yourself, explain how you got their name (if appropriate) and why you are calling. Briefly describe the type of work you are looking for, and ask for ideas. Most people will be happy to tell you what they know, and refer you to others who may know more.

Remember to thank people for their time and help. You want to make a good impression and some of the people you contact may be in a position to influence future hiring decisions.

Network on-line

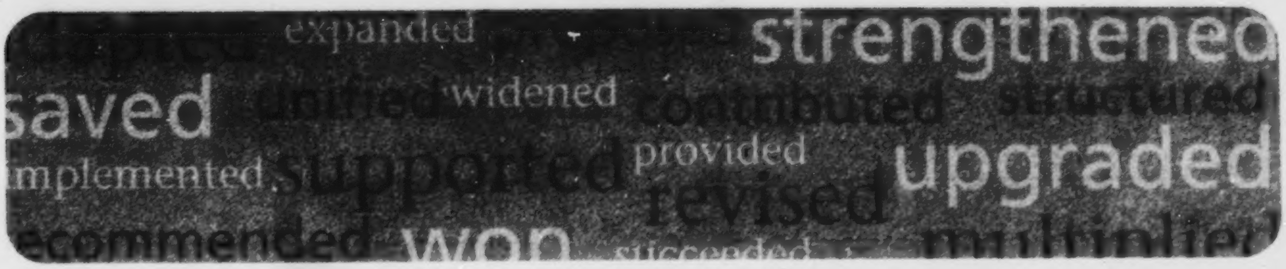
As well as in person and over the phone. Join and participate in listservs, newsgroups and discussion forums related to the industry or employment field in which you want to work. As long as it would not jeopardize your current employment, let people you meet on-line know that you are looking for a specific type of work. Again, ask for suggestions.

> *Tip:* Before you start sending messages, read what others are saying to get a feel for what's going on. When you feel comfortable doing so, post your own message. Always be courteous and professional in what you say and how you say it.

Volunteer

If your volunteer work is directly related to your work search targets, volunteering could lead directly to paid employment. Even if it doesn't, you will meet more people to add to your network. An added bonus is that many organizations offer training programs for volunteers. Most of the skills they teach are skills that are directly applicable in the labour market.

Networking will have positive results because you are taking control and taking action.



Direct contact

Networking and making direct contact are the two most effective ways to find work opportunities. More job seekers find work by using these two methods alone than by using all other work search methods combined.

Making **direct contact** means contacting employers directly by phone, in person or in writing to explore employment possibilities and, hopefully, set up a job interview. You may have obtained employer names and contact information by networking, or through library or Internet research. Or, if you are looking for a retail or hospitality position, you can find employers by simply walking down busy streets.

If the idea of phoning an employer or walking in and asking for an interview makes you nervous, practice. Think about what potential employers might want to know about you. There are probably several employers out there right now who are hoping someone will call, so they don't have to advertise a vacant position and go through all the work involved in screening applicants.

The worst that can happen is that people will say no. How bad can that be? On the other hand, the potential benefit is enormous.

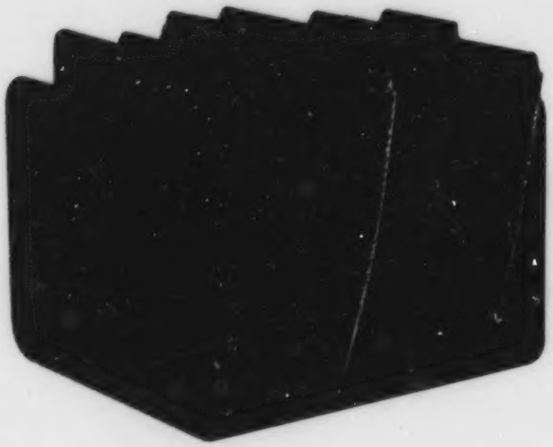
Don't memorize a script of what you are going to say – just make a list of things you want to talk about. Practice getting those points across clearly and confidently. You can practice in front of a mirror, by role playing with friends and/or by recording yourself to find out how you sound. If you are still nervous, contact employers who don't really interest you first. That way, you will be more experienced and less nervous later, when you call people in organizations that interest you more.

When you are contacting employers in person or by phone, make sure you have a copy of your résumé with you. When you contact employers by letter or e-mail, include a copy of your résumé.

Contact notes

You will need an organized way to keep notes about your contacts. Otherwise, a few weeks down the road, you won't be able to remember exactly who you contacted, when and what was said (e.g. when you said you would call them back).

You will be more in control and much more efficient if you use a contact tracking system such as the following. Photocopy this page to keep track of your job leads.



Job Lead or Contact

Person ____________________

Ph. No. ____________________

Org. ____________________

Address ____________________

E-mail ____________________

Day and time of meeting ____________________

Comments ____________________

Résumé sent ____________________

Thank you note sent ____________________

Follow up ____________________

Job Lead or Contact

Person ____________________

Ph. No. ____________________

Org. ____________________

Address ____________________

E-mail ____________________

Day and time of meeting ____________________

Comments ____________________

Résumé sent ____________________

Thank you note sent ____________________

Follow up ____________________

Job Lead or Contact

Person ____________________

Ph. No. ____________________

Org. ____________________

Address ____________________

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E-mail ____________________

Day and time of meeting ____________________

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Comments ____________________

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Résumé sent ____________________

Thank you note sent ____________________

Follow up ____________________

Job Lead or Contact

Person ____________________

Ph. No. ____________________

Org. ____________________

Address ____________________

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E-mail ____________________

Day and time of meeting ____________________

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Comments ____________________

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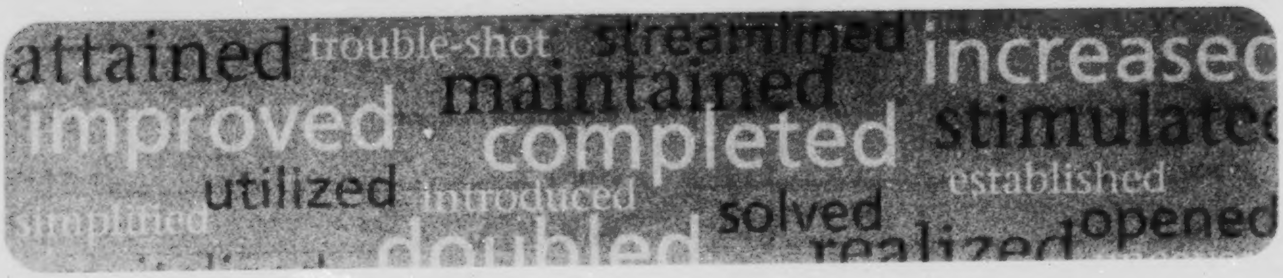
Résumé sent ____________________

Thank you note sent ____________________

Follow up ____________________



Strategies for Success

Be good to yourself. Set yourself up for success. If you are unemployed, spend as much time each day looking for work (networking, researching employers and leads, contacting employers and preparing applications) as you would at work if you had a job. Don't just keep yourself busy – work as efficiently and effectively as you can by setting priorities and managing your time. If necessary, start by doing some reading about time management techniques.

The harder and smarter you work at finding work, the sooner you will succeed and the more likely you will be happy with what you find. You need to:

- get organized
- be creative
- be financially responsible
- be as generous and understanding with yourself as you are with others
- recognize the stages of job loss.

Get organized

Keep all of your work search papers together and organized. For example, use a set of file folders or a three-ring binder with sections to organize:

- information about you (e.g. your results from the self-assessment exercises in this workbook)
- labour market information and ideas to follow up (e.g. news articles about organizations that interest you, magazine articles about employment trends, notes you jot down when you get an idea, job postings)
- employer contact information and related notes (e.g. names, phone numbers, dates contacted, outcomes, and when to call back)
- your work search tools (e.g. different versions of your résumé, copies of your cover letters, your contact notes).

Whatever system you use, set it up so you have an organized way to record your actions and monitor your progress. Employers will be impressed with your energy and organizational skills. And, most important, all the information you need to succeed in your work search will be at your fingertips.

Be creative

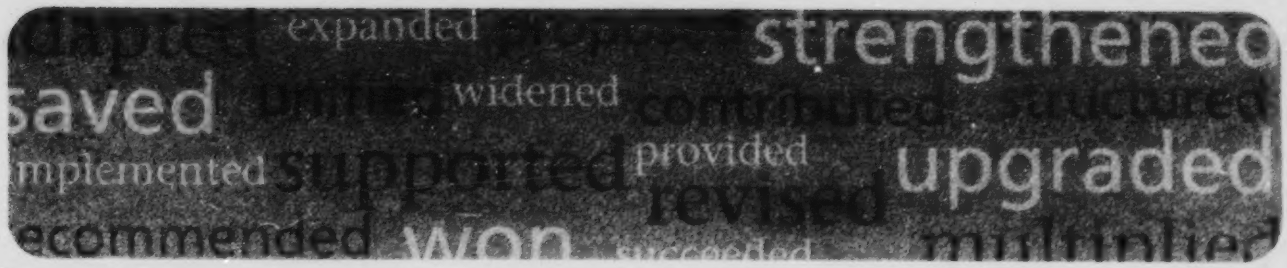
Creativity is a marketable skill and a crucial part of a successful work search. Use creative thinking, and you are certain to stand out from the crowd.

When you are doing the exercises in this workbook, let your imagination run wild. Expand your thinking by just letting ideas flow, instead of stopping to critically examine each idea. Jot down all of your ideas, even the ones you think are unworkable. Try to come up with as many ideas as you can, no matter how ridiculous. You will be surprised at how often ideas you think are "way out in left field" can later evolve into realistic solutions to problems.

Be financially responsible

If you are unemployed or soon will be, there are at least three reasons for dealing with any concerns you may have about money NOW, instead of later.

1. Worrying about money drains energy you need for your work search.
2. If employers get the impression that you want to work for them only because you need the money, they probably won't hire you.
3. If you are worried about money, you are more likely to accept work you don't really want. If you don't like



the work, you will be looking for work again much sooner than you would otherwise.

Plan ahead so you aren't caught off guard by work search expenses. You will need appropriate clothing and shoes, stationery supplies, and funds for things such as transportation and postage.

Prepare for the unexpected: your work search could take months.

- Take stock of all possible sources of income: severance pay, pension fund refunds, employment insurance (EI), etc.
- If you are eligible for it, apply for EI immediately and fill out the forms carefully. Your first cheque will take several weeks to arrive and any problems with your forms will create a further delay.
- Consider ways to save and/or earn money over the short term. For example, you could hold a garage sale, deliver newspapers, or exchange services with friends and neighbours (e.g. you babysit for others and they babysit for you).
- Keep track of your expenses and see if you can cut back anywhere. Look through your receipts and bank statements to figure out how much you are currently spending and on what.

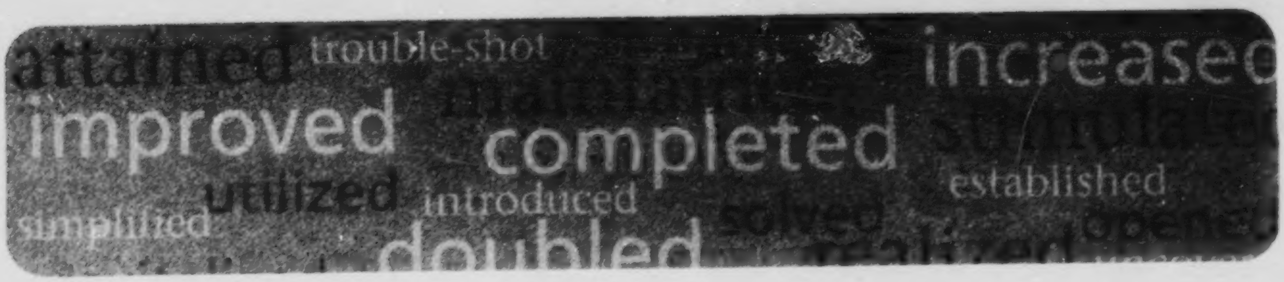
If you owe money, discuss your situation with your bank manager or a financial counsellor. You may be able to consolidate your debts and/or negotiate smaller loan payments.

Be generous and understanding

Looking for work is hard work. To maintain your energy and hope, remember to "stop and smell the roses" from time to time. Reward yourself when you have worked hard. Do things that help to keep you hopeful and energetic.

Following is a list of inexpensive things you can do to reward yourself and maintain your momentum. These are only a few of the possibilities.

- run, jog, lift weights or work out
- walk the dog
- go for a bike ride
- read a book, cover to cover
- watch a favorite movie
- do a crossword puzzle
- listen to your favorite music
- walk in a park
- visit a museum
- shoot some hoops or toss a football with friends
- attend a free concert
- organize a pick-up game of hockey
- draw
- build something
- skate
- read cartoon books or comics
- dance
- do some gardening
- take a long bubble bath surrounded by candlelight and music


attained
trouble-shot
increased
improved
completed
utilized
introduced
established
simplified
solved
doubled

To develop your own list of potential rewards, list at least three things in each of the following categories.

My favourite activities – alone ____________________

My favourite activities – with others ____________________

My favourite places to be ____________________

Favorite foods ____________________

Favourite subjects to read about ____________________

Positive people in my life ____________________

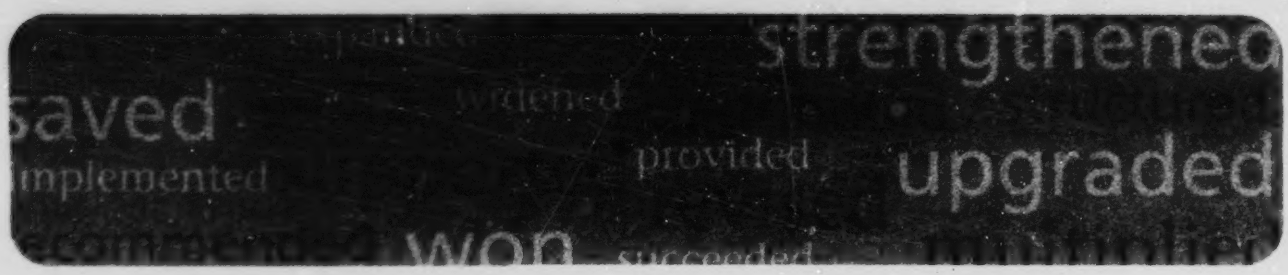
Mix and match the favourites you have listed. For example, a weekend reward might be to spend an afternoon baking bread with a positive person you enjoy being around. Or, if you enjoy fresh bread but aren't interested in baking it yourself, visit a bakery or a friend who likes to bake.

Give yourself a small daily reward and bigger rewards on weekends.

Recognize the stages of job loss

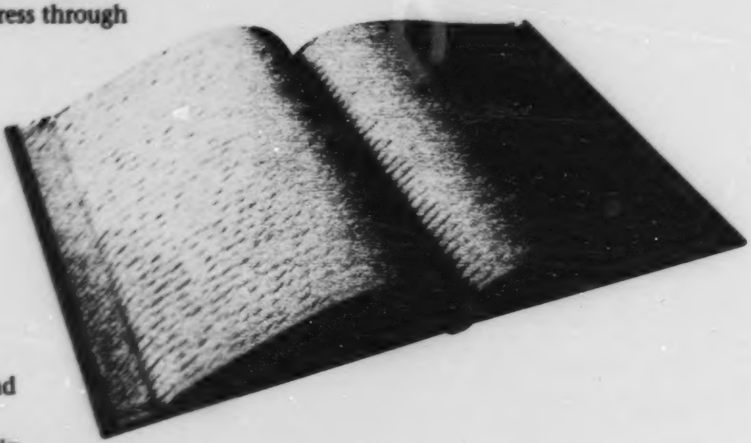
If you have been laid off or fired, you may have to deal with some of the emotional residue before you are ready to begin a serious work search. Some people experience all of the following stages of job loss within hours; others need more time to work through particular stages.

- **Denial**
  At first, you may be in shock and act as though nothing has happened, particularly if you didn't foresee losing your job.



- **Anger**
  You may blame yourself, your employer and/or someone else.
- **Bargaining**
  You may try to reverse the situation by offering to take a pay cut or move to another position in the company.
- **Depression**
  Reach out and let your family and friends help you through this stage. Other people directly affected by your job loss may also be grieving, and need to talk about their fears too.
- **Acceptance**
  You accept the fact that the job is gone, and start gearing up for the work search ahead.

Even if you have not been laid off or fired, you will experience emotional "highs" and "lows" as you progress through your work search. However, there is something you can do at the very beginning to ensure that the lows are not as low as they could be: **make sure your expectations are realistic.** Prepare yourself emotionally and financially for a work search that could take six months or longer. You may find work faster than that, but don't expect to.



One of the best ways to cope with emotional highs and lows is to talk about your feelings. Don't shut out the people who care about you. Acknowledge and talk about your deepest emotions with people you trust. Keep a private journal, and use it to write out your fears and frustrations.

If you ever get to the point that your "lows" seem to keep getting lower, talk to a professional counsellor. Reach out to organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association to find the services you need.

PART 2

RESUMES, LETTERS AND OTHER MARKETING TOOLS

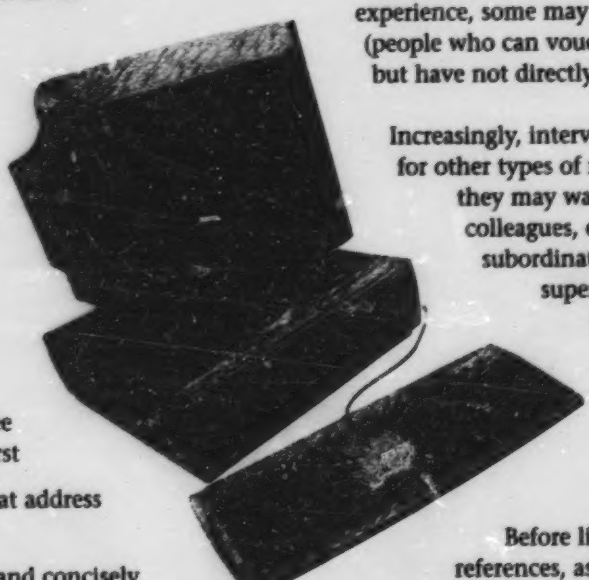
Looking for work is all about selling yourself. To be a good salesperson, you must:

- know your product (your skills and strengths)
- target your search by identifying organizations that need your product
- present your product in a way that will attract attention and highlight your most relevant qualifications.

Part 1 of this workbook was about identifying your skills and preferences, and researching employers who need someone like you. This part, Part 2, is about developing marketing tools that present your product in the best possible light, and Part 3 is about making positive face to face connections in an interview.

If you are like most people, self-promotion does not come easily. You will be happy to know "soft" sales approaches are often much more effective than "hard" sales pitches. Here is what you have to do to promote yourself:

- choose your references carefully
- target your résumés so employers see your most relevant qualifications first
- write letters and e-mail messages that address employers' needs
- complete application forms clearly and concisely
- develop and use other marketing tools (e.g. curriculum vitae, business cards, proposals, webpages, alternative résumé formats)
- keep improving your marketing tools as you learn from experience which marketing strategies work best for you.



References

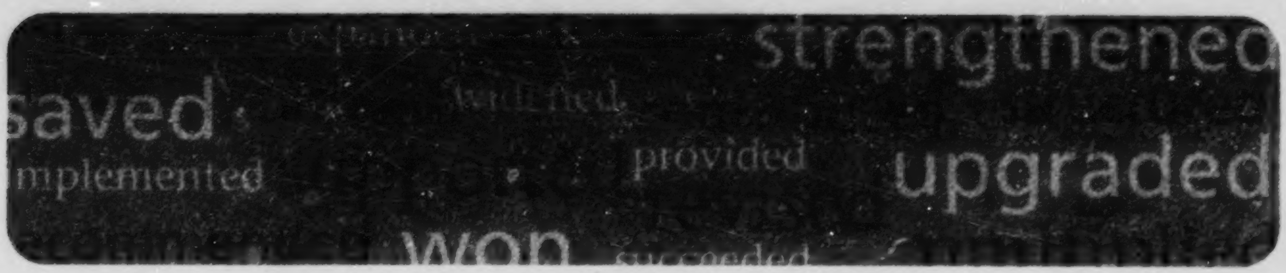
Your references are a crucial part of your marketing strategy. They should be people who:

- know you well enough to be able to answer specific questions about your character, skills and work ethic
- can recommend you to employers without reservation
- have good communication skills, especially on the phone.

You should have at least three references who have supervised you (on the job, at school, or in volunteer situations). If you have limited experience, some may be personal references (people who can vouch for your character, but have not directly supervised your work).

Increasingly, interviewers are also asking for other types of references. For example, they may want references from your colleagues, customers or subordinates, as well as supervisors. If it is to your advantage, consider the possibility of providing these types of references even when you are not asked for them.

Before listing people as references, ask for permission to give their names and contact information to employers. Also ask your references if they can give you a good recommendation. Don't assume they will. To succeed in finding work, you need references who sincerely believe you are a valuable worker.



If you get any indication that a potential reference would not be completely comfortable recommending your work, ask someone else. If a reference sounds hesitant about answering a question, for whatever reason, employers may become suspicious.

To ensure your references are ready to answer questions promptly and positively, give them a copy of your résumé and let them know:

- what type(s) of work you will be applying for
- which skills you want to emphasize
- whether or not you will be including their names and contact information with your résumé.

If you think your references might get tired of answering reference calls, use a phrase such as "References available upon request" at end of your résumé. Supply your list of references only to those employers who request it, and take copies of your list with you to interviews.

On your list of references, include names and phone numbers, the organizations your references represent, and their relationship to you (e.g. immediate supervisor, client).

Résumés

A résumé is a one-page or two-page summary of your experience and education. Its purpose is to communicate to employers that you have the skills they need.

To write a résumé that gets this message across as effectively as possible, you have to know:

- what skills you have and want to use and develop
- which skills employers are looking for when they screen applicants in your employment field.

For information about how to identify your skills and research employers, see Part 1 of this workbook.

Employers often receive over a hundred applications for an advertised position, and have to select a limited number of people to interview. That means they have to screen out the vast majority of applicants. To do that quickly, they may start by discarding any application that does not meet acceptable standards (e.g. does not have a cover letter or contains spelling errors), as well as applications that do not clearly show the applicant has the desired qualifications. Therefore, it is critical that your application be as close to perfect as possible.

Some of the advice in books about résumé writing may not apply in your particular situation. Always check the source and date of the résumé writing resources you use. When in doubt, consult people who are knowledgeable about current hiring practices and preferences in your target market.

If you are applying for more than one type of work, you need more than one résumé. For example, Joel Jobin is interested in three types of work:

- firefighter
- telecommunications technologist, and
- foreman (of telephone installers).

Since each type of position has different skill and knowledge requirements, Joel will need at least three different résumés. His basic résumé for firefighting positions should emphasize his:

- physical strength and agility
- knowledge and understanding of the role of firefighter
- teamwork skills
- attraction to adventure
- adaptability
- sports and athletic involvement
- commitment to helping others

trouble-shot
increased
improved
completed
introduced
established
simplified
doubled

- volunteer firefighting experience
- background in naval cadets.

His résumé for telecommunications technologist positions should emphasize his:

- technical telecommunications skills and journeyman certification
- NAIT Telecommunications Technologist Diploma
- special employment related project assignments
- interpersonal skills
- problem-solving skills.

His résumé for supervisory positions should emphasize his:

- ability to motivate
- ability to delegate
- ability to hire, train, coach
- ability to give developmental feedback
- ability to listen, organize, plan and make decisions
- telecommunications technical expertise
- supervisory or management training
- leadership roles in volunteer, sports and community activities.

When you respond to an advertisement or job posting, provide the information employers need to assess your suitability for that particular job. Read the ad carefully, looking for clues about what the employer wants to see in an ideal candidate. Compare what the employer needs to what you have to offer, and highlight your strongest relevant qualifications. Use the same words used in the ad to clearly communicate that you have the desired qualifications.

Keep every ad you respond to for future reference. Reviewing several ads for similar positions will give you a better overall idea of what employers want.

Résumé formats

There are three basic résumé formats: chronological, functional and combination. Most people find that a combination format is the most effective because it highlights the information they want employers to see first.

Chronological

A chronological résumé highlights your employment background, education and training in reverse chronological order (most recent or current experience first). It includes names of organizations, dates and key duties performed. It tells what you have done, but not how well.

Employers generally prefer this format because it is easier for them to screen applicants out. They can quickly determine if you have the specific combination of education and experience they requested. If you don't, you are screened out.

A chronological résumé format is probably the one you learned in high school, college or university. But it may not market your skills as well as a combination format.

VIDEO

If Frank applied for a petroleum engineering position, it would make sense for him to use a chronological résumé format to highlight his many years of directly related experience. But he is looking for work as a fundraiser, so a combination format will market his skills better.

Functional

A functional résumé lists skills or accomplishments instead of employment background, and highlights how well you have applied your skills. It may omit references to past employment altogether, or list past employers with no mention of specific duties or dates.

strengthened
saved
implemented
provided
upgraded
won
succeeded

This résumé format is not appealing to Canadian employers. They want to see sufficient detail, including dates and key responsibilities, so they can assess the relevance of your background.

Use this format only if you have no paid employment background or you have been out of the labour market for a long time – at home raising a family, in prison, ill or out of the country travelling, for example.

Combination

A combination résumé combines chronological and functional formats. It includes chronological background information but also includes information about how you have performed, the results you have achieved, and/or the skills you have developed.

A combination résumé makes you appealing to potential employers by showing what you have contributed. It tells employers what you can do for them.

If you have done similar work for a number of different organizations, a combination format allows you to group related experiences together to shorten your résumé and/or make it more impressive.

A combination résumé should include the following information:

- name
- mailing address
- phone number
- e-mail address, if you have one
- a brief description of your strongest qualifications (typically called profile, summary, highlights, skill strengths, accomplishments or contributions)
- employment background
- education.

It may also be to your advantage to include the following:

- community/volunteer activities
- leisure interests
- a list of references or a statement about references (e.g. "References will be supplied at the interview").

VIDEO

For Lesley, a chronological résumé would emphasize that she is well-educated with an MBA and a B.Sc. in Nursing. However, it would also show that she has very little employment background in her field. She knows that if she targets large urban hospitals, she will be competing with senior health care administrators who have equivalent or better educational qualifications and substantial employment backgrounds in health care management.

Azim's résumé, which he has called a Curriculum Vitae, is typical of employer expectations in the academic world. It is a 22-page, detailed account of his academic background, including narrative descriptions of all the teaching he has done, his research and his writing. His credentials and references are all foreign. He has overlooked the language barrier this creates for Canadian school boards. Further, his sentence structure and grammar draw attention to the fact that he is new to Canada. His competition for traditional teaching positions will include qualified, experienced teachers who know and understand Canadian English, culture, values and history.

Sample combination résumés

The following fictitious examples demonstrate how you can use a combination résumé to fit your situation.

Steven Cordeiro

Job target:
Customer service representative in a telecommunications or financial institution. Steven wants to emphasize his interpersonal and communication skills.

STEVEN CORDEIRO

9999 – Unknown Drive
Edmonton, Alberta
T1E 515
E-mail: scordeiro@email.ca
Phone: (780) 555-2222

Profile

Energetic, customer service oriented professional with extensive experience and demonstrated competence responding to customer needs in a variety of organizations

Skill Strengths

Excellent public relations skills
Independent work habits
Well developed interpersonal and problem solving abilities
Strong computer skills
Responsible, organized and dedicated

Employment Background:

Teller

Local Bank
December 2000 to present
Provide responsive customer service to a high volume of clients, receive deposits, dispense cash, process large commercial account deposits, balance daily cash float, update computer files.

Customer Service Clerk

Independent Clothing Store
December 2000 to June 2001
Provided responsive customer service promoting sales of quality clothing to meet customer needs, performed cashier functions, designed and implemented displays, maintained inventory, organized stock, cleaned store.

Sporting Goods Clerk

Cycle and Sports
August 1999 to November 2000 and
August 1997 to December 1998
Responded to customer service needs, sold and serviced bicycles and sporting goods, operated cash register, processed cash and credit sales, balanced cash, opened and closed shop.

Page 2 Steven Cordeiro (780) 555-2222

Operator 1

City Recreation and Parks department
May 2000 to October 2000
May 1999 to August 1999 and
May 1998 to August 1998

Operated and maintained heavy-duty equipment including tractors, front-end loaders, one-ton and three-ton trucks and hand operated implements; repaired and maintained turf, including seeding, fertilizing and top dressing.

Waiter

Trendy Restaurant
December 1998 to July 1999
Actively participated in opening the restaurant, waited on tables, served customers, promoted products, processed and balanced cash.

Labourer

City Recreation and Parks department
Summers of 1995, 1996 and 1997
Maintained Oakview Golf Course including turf repair, irrigation repair and grass cutting.

Education:

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) – Economics, ABC University, 2000
significant electives in Computing Science

Advanced High School Diploma – Composite High School, 1995

First Aid Certificate – St. John's Ambulance, 1998

Community Involvements:

Coached minor lacrosse

Leisure and Recreational Interests:

Weight training, squash, golf, team sports of hockey and lacrosse, Restore classic cars

References

Will be supplied at time of interview

Robert Brown

Job Target:
Counsellor in a correctional institution with teens.

Problem:
Academic qualifications unrelated, according to employers. No related paid experience. Strong competition from experienced and academically qualified people.

Assets:
Transferable knowledge, skills and abilities from education, volunteer activities, and paid and life experience. Excellent knowledge of sports and recreational programs. Willingness to relocate and compete for rural positions.

ROBERT BROWN

Box 1700
Northern Outpost, Canada
X2Z 2Z2
E-mail: rcbrown@email.ca
Phone: (001) 777-7777

SUMMARY

Several years of professional experience in teaching, coaching and leading sport/recreational programs with young adults in both rural and urban settings.

Interested in Physical Education, Criminology and Medicine.

Areas of Effectiveness

- Strong communication skills and effective listener
- Well-developed observational and assessment abilities
- Good role-playing skills via supportive counselling approach
- Effective recreational leader and organizer in a broad range of sport and related activities

FORMAL EDUCATION

Bachelor of Education Degree	Graduated from ABC University, 1999 Major: Physical Education Minor: Biological Sciences
High School Diploma	Completed high school requirements in High River, Alberta

Page 2 Robert Brown (001) 777-7777

EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND

Teacher Practicum

Wetaskiwin Jr./Sr. High School, Wetaskiwin, Alberta
Jan. '99 to June '99

- taught Physical Education Grades 7 through 12
- taught Grade 12 Biology

Range Supervisor

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development,
June - Aug. '98

- in charge of gathering data on an experimental project dealing with goats

Plotsman

Soils & Crop Research, Agriculture Canada, June to Aug. '97

- maintenance of research plots throughout Alberta

Parks and Recreation Director

Two Hills Recreation Board, June to Aug. '96

- organized, instructed and supervised recreation programs
- planned the construction of a recreation park

Lightning Rod Agent

Alberta Lightning Rod Co. Ltd.
Summers of 1990 through 1995

- installed lightning rod protection systems on houses, buildings, etc.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Asst. EMT/Driver Lakeland Ambulance, High River
Sept. 1993 to Sept. 1995

- drove an ambulance and assisted in emergency care of the injured

Sports

- Vice-President, High River Minor Soccer Association, 1994
- Coach, High River Minor Soccer Assoc., 1991 to 1994

ATHLETIC AWARDS

W.M.A.C. International Brown Belt Champion

World Martial Art Council division one
Conference champion, 1998 to 2000

W.M.A.C. Brown Belt World Contender

Ranking issued as of Aug. 1996
until title championship 1998

Canadian Amateur Sport Certification Program

Canadian Soccer Assoc. Level 3
Canadian Football Assoc. Level 1
Canadian Basketball Assoc. Level 1
Canadian Gymnastic Assoc. Level 1
Canadian Volleyball Assoc. Level 1

Award of Excellence

Canadian Soccer Association

REFERENCES

Available upon request

Janellen Ali

Job Target:
Personnel trainee with organization where relocation to other countries is a future possibility.

Problem:
No directly related personnel experience, no hospitality industry background, unrelated degree.

Assets:
Several languages, life experience, excellent customer service and interpersonal skills.

JANELLEN ALI

1653 Success Street
Anywhere, Canada
X2Z 2Z2
E-mail: jali@email.ca
Phone: (011) 999-9999

Objective

Professional/trainee position in Human Resources/Personnel in recruitment or training and development.

Capabilities/Achievements

- Excellent verbal and written ability in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French
- Skilled in explaining, advising, and consulting
- Successful organization and planning of various work and leisure-related activities
- Ability to lead, direct and motivate people of all ages
- Effective dealing with people's problems and concerns
- Good listening skills; concentrate well and learn quickly
- Able to empathize and work with people of differing backgrounds and cultures
- Deal accurately with finances
- Planned, promoted, and hosted special events for the public
- Scholastic achievement awards (school and province) '79 through '88

Education

Bachelor of Education with Distinction, XYZ University 1988
Major: Social Sciences
Minor: Modern Languages (French)

Workshops and seminars about dealing with the public, marketing strategies and instructor training.

Have applied for the ABC University Personnel Administration Certificate program.

Employment History

High School Teacher – Sosua High School, Dominican Republic
Sept. 1989 to June 2001
- planned, taught, and evaluated courses in English, Spanish, History, Science, Religion, Computer Theory, and Phys. Ed.

- organized and supervised extra-curricular sports and cultural events
- ran the school bookstore; ordering, inventory, sales
- instituted and oversaw the use of a career library
- participated on the school discipline board

Instructor/Lifeguard – Coronation Pool, City of Edmonton
April 1984 to August 1989

- instructed aquatics and fitness classes for patrons from age two to senior citizen
- supervised public use of pool
- learned to maintain and repair mechanical equipment vital to pool operation
- planned and hosted special events
- checked and secured cash

Assistant Waterfront Director – Girl Guides of Canada
June to August 1979

- assisted in planning and leading fitness and aquatic programs
- maintained buildings, lawns, and equipment
- responsible for first aid and counselling of campers

Volunteer Experience

Protocol Hostess – World Track and Field Event
August 2001

- guided and translated for VIPs attending the games
- relayed problems or concerns to the appropriate authorities

Adapted Aquatics instructor – Londonderry Pool, City of Edmonton
Sept. 1983 to Dec. 1984

- instructed and supervised youths and adults with physical and mental handicaps

Volunteer – Misericordia Hospital, Edmonton
1978 to 1979

- assisted nurses with non-medical duties
- verified and maintained an adequate supply of materials
- visited and assisted patients

Leisure Activities

Enjoy sports (all water sports, aerobics, and skiing) and the arts (theatre and dance), and have attended community sponsored courses in many of these.

References available upon request.

Amy Harden

Job Target:
Investigative position with Ombudsman

Problem:
Limited directly related investigative experience

Assets:
Variety of leadership roles and demonstrated effectiveness in producing results

Amy Harden

1586 Gibraltar
Anywhere, Canada
X2Z 2Z2
E-mail: Amy.Harden@email.ca
Phone: (011) 333-3333

Summary:

Extensive experience dealing with people at all levels and using well-developed communication skills to interview people, investigate and report critical incidents, consult with professionals, analyze situations and process evidence.

Areas of Effectiveness:

Communication Skills	Establish credibility and develop trust readily; strong interviewing, observation and investigative ability; active listening skills; well-developed analysis and assessment skills; thorough and objective report writing skills.
Leadership and Personal Management	Highly motivated, people oriented, adaptable, responsible, tactful, thorough, organized and perceptive.

Employment History:

Correctional Service Worker	Alberta Solicitor General, May 1991 to August 2001 Counselled, supervised and role-modelled with young adults in correctional facility. Demonstrated effectiveness in handling critical incidents, diffusing anger and mediating disputes fairly – first female counsellor assigned to most serious offender unit.
Field Placements	Youth Development Centre, Family Support, Rundle Boys and Girls Club, College Community Friends Designed and implemented recreational programs and facilitated support groups.
Advertising and Promotions Manager – Northcote Dining Lounge	Inner Village Catering Ltd., May 1988 to August 1988 Recruited, trained and supervised staff. Developed special theme events to increase sales. Negotiated unpaid appearances of entertainers as attractions.

Sales Clerk	Night Owl Boutique, September 1987 to April 1988 Increased sales 17% end of first year.
Show Home Hostess (part-time)	Springer Development Corporation, March to Sept. 1987 Promoted show home sales through strong product knowledge and interpersonal skills.
Dance Instructor	Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) June to Aug. 1987 Designed, implemented dance class program. Coached and motivated participants.
Fashion Consultant	Town and Country, Oct. 1986 to April 1987 Top sales consultant four of six months there. Initiated store merchandise displays, which generated customer interest and positive feedback from managers.
Manageress	Night Owl Boutique, Nov. 1985 to Sept. 1986 Managed special lingerie boutique, increased sales, developed strong customer base.
Volunteer Co-ordinator House Manager and Box Office Manager	Northern Light Theatre, March 1981 to Sept. 1986 Developed box office procedures. Recruited, trained and supervised volunteers in front-of-house activities.
Junior Supervisor	Alberta Culture, Provincial Drama School, July to Aug. 1981 Supervised group of summer drama school participants; developed and coordinated activities.

Education:

Child Care Worker Diploma	1989 – Community College (Awarded Women's Bureau Scholarship)
High School Diploma	1981 – St. Joseph Composite High School (Outstanding Scholastic Achievement Award – Grade 12)

Personal Interests and Hobbies:

Wide range of activities, including horseback riding, skiing, skating, cycling, squash, camping, running and swimming.

Special interest in the performing arts; spend a good deal of time maintaining dance skills and physical fitness.

References will be provided on request

Joan Opoku

Job Target:
Chemical Sales

Asset:
Strong transferable/marketable skills for sales role

Problem:
No sales experience

JOAN OPOKU

777 Whitestone Square, Anywhere, Canada [illegible]
E-mail: jopoku@email.ca Phone: (011) 777-7777

Informational Skills	- critically review results and conclusions - comprehend basic scientific principles - quickly attain competency in new skills - gather information swiftly and thoroughly
Communication Skills	- speak easily to large or small groups of people - disseminate interesting facts comfortably - creatively express unusual concepts - present technical information easily
People Skills	- answer questions creatively - tutor and train effectively - readily assist and co-operate - receptive to other people
Computer Proficiency	- PCs: IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Apple, Olivetti - Operating systems: MS DOS, Watstar and VMS - Applications: Lotus Symphony and 1-2-3-, Paperclip - Software Languages: Fortran, Basic, Pascal

EDUCATION:

University of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec
Honours Bachelor of Science with Specialization in Chemistry, December 1993

EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND:

Research Scientist	Federated Foods Inc., Montreal, Quebec March 1994 to present - Devised and implemented research project in canned product development.

Research Assistant

Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, Barrie, Ontario
Sept. to Dec. 1993 & Jan. to March 1994
- Examined analytical computer software using theoretical laser-generated, spectroscopic signals.
- Assembled and arranged optics in spectrometer for use with laser probe.

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT:

Laboratory Technician

Quebec Ministry of Environment
June to Aug. 1992
- Identified purgeable/total organic halide (POX/TOX) detector limitations.

Quality Technician

AMOCO Canada, Calgary, Alberta
June to Aug. 1991
- Analyzed raw materials and finished products.

Other Employment

Clerical assistant, assembly operator and salesperson.

LANGUAGES:

Functionally bilingual in written and spoken French and English.

ACTIVITIES/INTERESTS/VOLUNTEER WORK:

- Musical ensembles including University Concert Band (1st clarinet)
- Tai chi and conventional fitness programs
- Travel, both national and international, especially camping and canoeing
- Creating copper enamelled jewellery and artwork
- Vegetable, flower and herb gardening
- Science Graduation Committee (1993) - member and contributor to fundraising event
- Watpub Organizer (1992) - planned and announced student work-term social events
- Quality Circle (1989) - member of improvement committee at assembly plant
- Tutor (1984 – 1986) for small groups of high school French students

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Your history

If you have never written a résumé, completing the following exercise will help you gather relevant background information. Collecting this information will also help you:

- complete application forms
- start putting a portfolio together.

If you already have a portfolio, use it to help you complete this exercise.

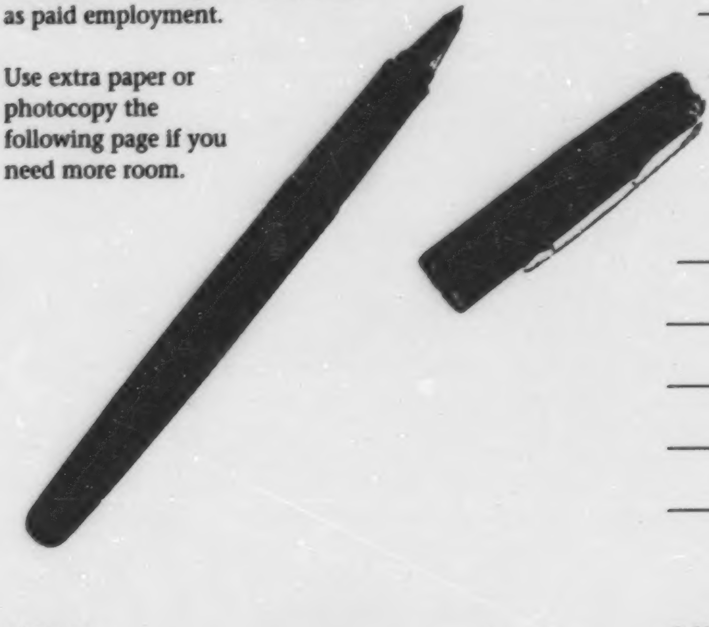
Employment background

List your employment history in reverse chronological order (most recent experience first), including the month and year you started and left each position.

Describe your responsibilities in point form.

If you have developed or demonstrated work-related skills through volunteer work, list those experiences as well as paid employment.

Use extra paper or photocopy the following page if you need more room.



Work Title ____________________

Organization ____________________

Address ____________________

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Supervisor/Manager ____________________

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Key Responsibilities ____________________

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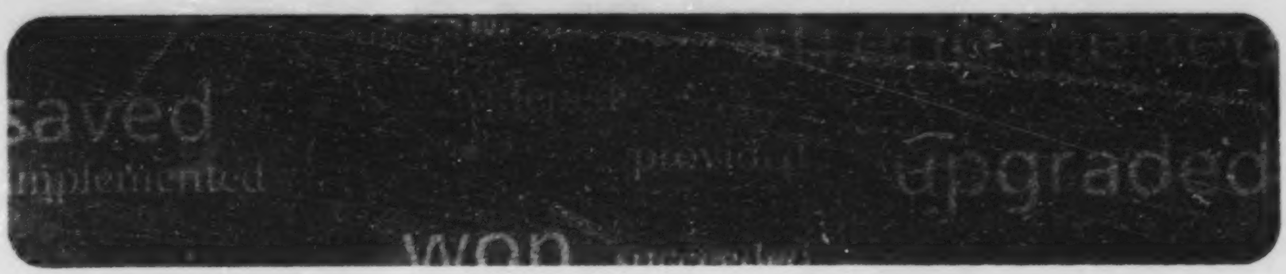
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Work Title ______________________

Organization ______________________

Address ______________________

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Dates ______________________

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Supervisor/Manager ______________________

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Key Responsibilities ______________________

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Work-related accomplishments

Review the exercises you completed in Part 1 of this workbook, and describe your accomplishments (e.g. "wrote a training manual that increased operation efficiency by 20 per cent").

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2. ______________________

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3. ______________________

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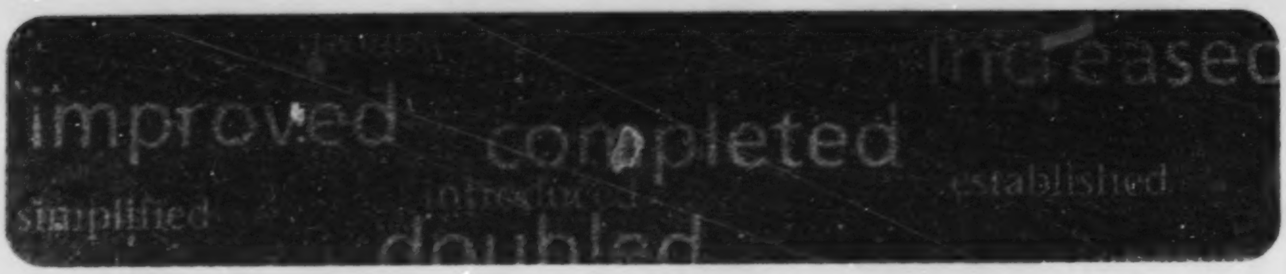
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Education and development

Post-Secondary: Technical/College/University Programs	Degree/Diploma	Year Graduated or Credits

High School

Have you taken or are you now taking any extension, adult education or other courses? If so, name the courses and state why you were interested in them.

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Memberships and volunteer work

List all of the organizations (community, cultural, professional, social) in which you are a member and/or for which you have worked as a volunteer.

Organization	How You Are/Were Involved
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2.	
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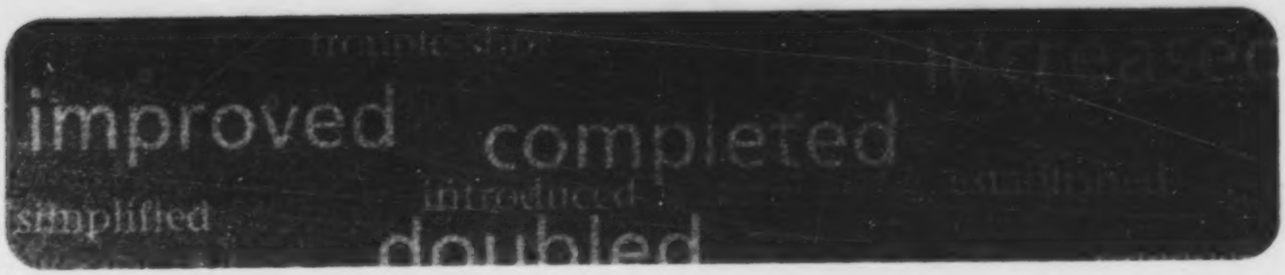
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	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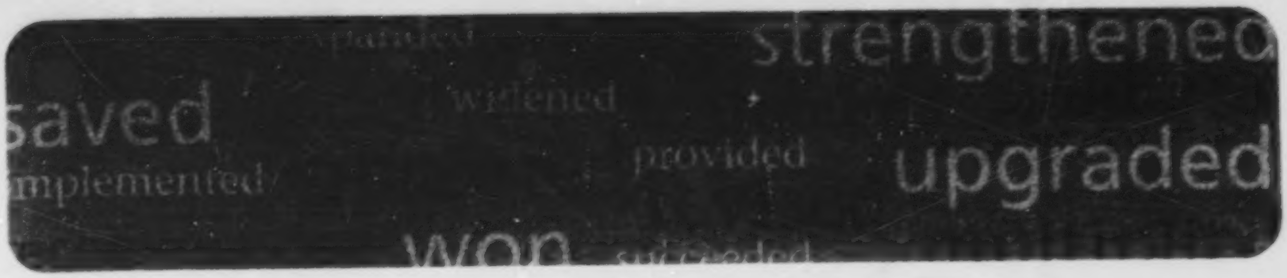
Hobbies/pastimes/interests

List everything, past and present, even activities that may seem unimportant to your career.

Do you see any work related applications for skills you have developed through your hobbies or interests? If so, what are they?



Writing your résumé

Your success in being invited for interviews will depend a great deal on decisions you make about:

- what information to include in your résumé
- where to place information in your résumé
- the overall appearance of your résumé
- the words you use.

Base your decisions about what to include and where on:

- your work search target
- the relevance of your education and experience to your target
- your strengths and weaknesses.

There are no strict rules. Make your own rules, depending on what will market your skills most effectively. Here are some general tips.

- Emphasize your strongest qualifications. Don't draw attention to your weaknesses, or supply information that might be used to screen you out. For example, don't include information that you are not required to supply under human rights legislation (e.g. age, gender, race, religion, marital status, ethnic background).
- Start with your name, address (including postal code), phone numbers (both home and office) and e-mail address (at home). For purposes of confidentiality, you may prefer not to be contacted at your current job. If so, provide a day phone number where messages can be left for you. Interviews are usually arranged by phone during office hours
- Following your name and contact information, a chronological résumé lists education and employment background. List the most relevant aspect of your background (education or employment) first.

  Caution: if the employer has indicated a preference for a degree or a credential that you don't have, do not list your education first. Job-seekers who wanted to show off a hard-earned but unrelated academic credential have lost job opportunities that way.
- Analyze the job ad and think about what the employer will be looking for. If you have the required skills and knowledge but lack the specific academic credential requested, apply anyway. If you present what you do have effectively, lack of a specific credential may not be a barrier.
- Be honest. Include only the truth, and use judgment about withholding information. For example, if you only have Grade 10 and the employer is asking for high school, don't mention your education. Or, near the end of your résumé, say something like "Education: High School, Rimbey, 1981."

Readability and a clean, crisp appearance are important. It is easier to understand information quickly when it is presented in short lines.

Do

- Use good quality 8.5" x 11" paper. Something with texture or a soft tint can make your résumé stand out, but the colour should be very subtle.
- Use a computer to produce clean, typed copy.
- Make sure your spelling is accurate and grammar is correct.
- Use active verbs and keywords (see next section) to describe what you have done.
- Make headings stand out by using bold print, capital letters or a different font.
- Make sure there is lots of white space on the page. It makes your résumé more appealing and readable.
- Balance margin width on the top, bottom and sides.

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- Put the words you want to emphasize (e.g. skill titles, work titles) down the left side of the page.
- Include employment dates (months and years) under or beside organization names. Don't put them in the left-hand column, unless you want to emphasize the length of time you have stayed with employers. Use your judgement. For example, if you stayed in one job at the same level for 17 years, employers may wonder why you never advanced. Or, if you have had a series of short-term contract or project positions, say so. Otherwise, employers may think you are unreliable.
- Limit the length of your résumé to no more than three pages. The ideal length is two pages. Some résumé publications recommend one page, but most Canadian employers want more detail than that.
- Make sure your résumé copies are clean, bright, straight and stain-free.
- Staple or paper clip pages together.

Don't

- sign your résumé
- handwrite
- bind your résumé in cerlox, Duo-tang or other special folders
- fold your résumé - always mail or deliver it in a 9"x 12" envelope.

Use active verbs and keywords

When describing past employment responsibilities and volunteer activities, use active verbs such as the following.

achieved
adapted
addressed
administered
advised
analyzed
anticipated
appraised
arbitrated
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assessed
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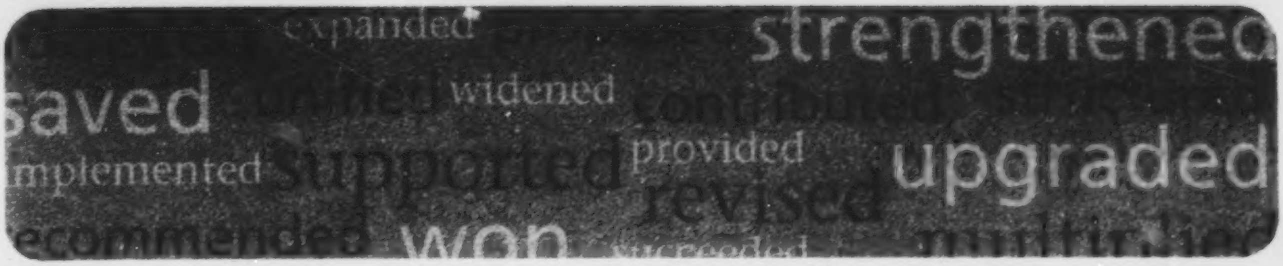

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ordered
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oversaw
painted
perceived
performed
persuaded
piloted
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politicked
predicted
prepared
prescribed
presented
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programmed
projected
promoted
protected
provided
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purchased
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separated
served
set up
shaped
shared
showed
sketched
sold
solved
spoke
studied
summarized
supervised
supplied
surveyed
symbolized
systematized
talked
taught
team-built
tended
tested
trained
transcribed
translated
travelled
trouble-shot
wrote

Use keywords

Keywords are nouns that tell employers you have the qualifications they want. For example, employers may be looking for people who:

- have studied certain subjects
- earned a particular credential
- know how to use specific tools (e.g. a computer program or power tools)
- have certain types of skills (e.g. public speaking skills or sales ability).

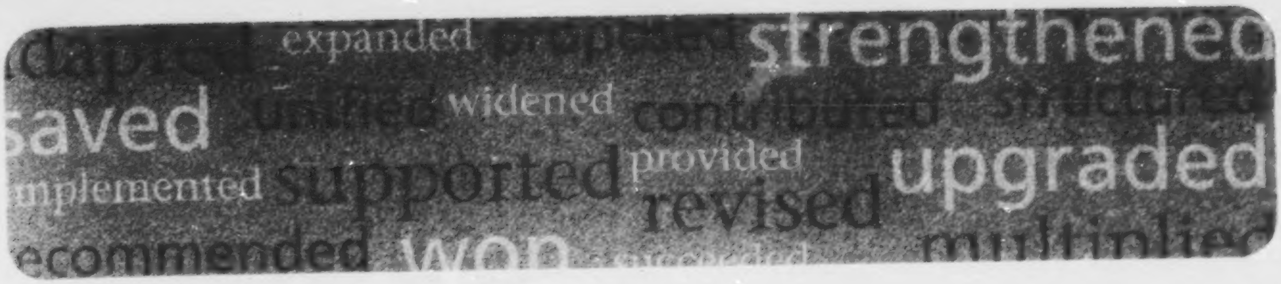
In your résumé and/or cover letter, make sure you use all of the keywords that appear in relevant job descriptions, ads and postings.

Résumé headings

Be selective about the résumé headings you choose to use – they can influence whether or not you get an interview.

Below are some possible résumé headings, listed in the order in which they usually appear on a résumé. Select the ones you think will be the most effective for you, or create headings of your own. The first two groups of headings are optional. They may not be relevant in your situation.

[illegible]	A short summary of what you offer – frequently used to link unrelated periods of employment and/or community work.
[illegible]	A one-line or two-line description of the kind of position you are seeking and your strongest qualification for it. Be specific. Avoid vague statements such as, "To obtain a challenging position with a progressive company that will allow me to grow and develop my analytical and problem-solving skills." Instead of saying what the employer can do for you (e.g. give you an opportunity to grow and develop), say what you can do for the employer (e.g. apply your problem-solving skills). Explain why you are interested in the job in your cover letter.
[illegible]	This is where to put information about your "work-related accomplishments". In a combination résumé, highlight what you are best at and what you have done successfully. Use these headings at the **beginning** of a combination résumé, immediately following your name and address. That's because employers almost always want to see your education and experience first for screening purposes, and expect to find them near the top. Use that spot to emphasize your strengths or accomplishments. Give the reader a good idea of what he or she would be getting if you were hired.
[illegible]	This is where to put "key responsibilities". Choose words that convey your professionalism, expertise, maturity and experience. * These headings are generally associated with entry-level jobs. "Work experience" is a term used for volunteer placements in which students have an opportunity to apply classroom knowledge and develop skills. Your paid employment should not be confused with this type of experience.



These are ideal headings if you are combining paid and non-paid experience.

List your most recent formal education first. If you have a degree, diploma or certificate, it is not necessary to list your high school diploma, since high school graduation is the prerequisite for post-secondary admission.

If you have taken numerous seminars and workshops, listing each of them would take too much space. Instead, combine them under a heading such as "Education and Development" and include a statement such as "Workshops and seminars on computer skills, leadership and supervision including..." Highlight one or two subject areas that are particularly relevant to the job. Follow with something like "Complete list of courses available on request."

Job seekers often wonder whether it is appropriate to include volunteer activities on a résumé. The answer is YES. In fact, leaving this information out could cost you a job. Many companies are committed to active participation in the community, and strongly encourage employees to volunteer.

If you want a promotion to a supervisory position but do not have formal or paid experience as a supervisor, use this part of your résumé to show you have related experience in volunteer roles (e.g. coaching softball or hockey, leading Girl Guides, organizing major fund-raising events, recruiting, training and coordinating volunteers for a church project).

Under human rights legislation, you are not required to name specific organizations of which you are a member. It may not be in your best interests to say that you are a member of a specific religious or political organization. Use your judgement.

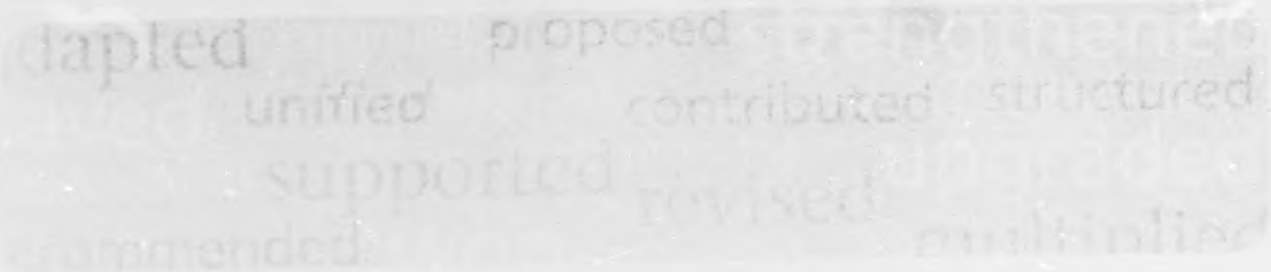
It is not necessary to list dates in this section.

Résumé headings

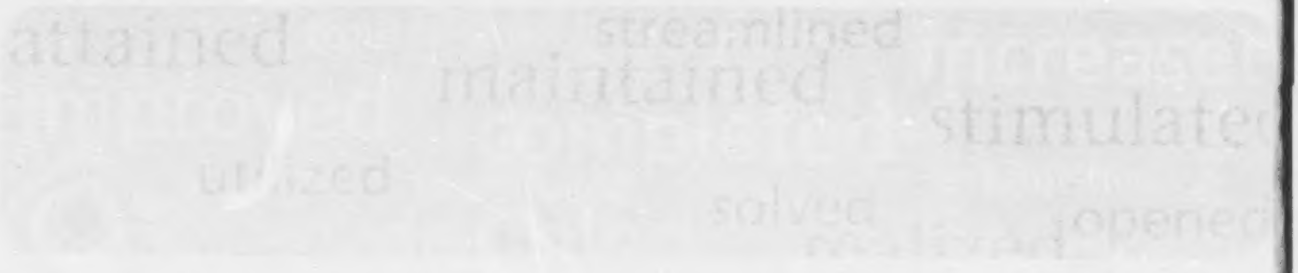
Be selective about the résumé headings you choose to use – they can influence whether or not you get an interview.

Below are some possible résumé headings, listed in the order in which they usually appear on a résumé. Select the ones you think will be the most effective for you, or create headings of your own. The first two groups of headings are optional. They may not be relevant in your situation.

Summary **Highlights** **Background** **Summary Of Background** **Profile**	A short summary of what you offer – frequently used to link unrelated periods of employment and/or community work.
Job Target **Career Objective** **Objective** **Job Goal** **Goal** **Position Applied For**	A one-line or two-line description of the kind of position you are seeking and your strongest qualification for it. Be specific. Avoid vague statements such as, "To obtain a challenging position with a progressive company that will allow me to grow and develop my analytical and problem-solving skills." Instead of saying what the employer can do for you (e.g. give you an opportunity to grow and develop), say what you can do for the employer (e.g. apply your problem-solving skills). Explain why you are interested in the job in your cover letter.
Talents **Accomplishments** **Achievements** **Strengths** **Areas Of Effectiveness** **Professional Attributes** **Results Achieved** **Skills** **Capabilities**	This is where to put information about your "work-related accomplishments". In a combination résumé, highlight what you are best at and what you have done successfully. Use these headings at the **beginning** of a combination résumé, immediately following your name and address. That's because employers almost always want to see your education and experience first for screening purposes, and expect to find them near the top. Use that spot to emphasize your strengths or accomplishments. Give the reader a good idea of what he or she would be getting if you were hired.
Employment **Employment Background** **Employment History** ***Work History** ***Work Experience**	This is where to put "key responsibilities". Choose words that convey your professionalism, expertise, maturity and experience. * These headings are generally associated with entry-level jobs. "Work experience" is a term used for volunteer placements in which students have an opportunity to apply classroom knowledge and develop skills. Your paid employment should not be confused with this type of experience.



Experience Highlights **Experience Background** **Career Experience** **Professional Background** **Professional Experience** **Relevant Experience**	These are ideal headings if you are combining paid and non-paid experience.
Education **Education Background** **Education – Training** **Education and Development** **Educational Development** **Post-Secondary Education** **Training and Development** **Professional Development**	List your most recent formal education first. If you have a degree, diploma or certificate, it is not necessary to list your high school diploma, since high school graduation is the prerequisite for post-secondary admission. If you have taken numerous seminars and workshops, listing each of them would take too much space. Instead, combine them under a heading such as "Education and Development" and include a statement such as "Workshops and seminars on computer skills, leadership and supervision including…" Highlight one or two subject areas that are particularly relevant to the job. Follow with something like "Complete list of courses available on request."
Volunteer Activities **Community Involvements** **Leadership Roles**	Job seekers often wonder whether it is appropriate to include volunteer activities on a résumé. The answer is YES. In fact, leaving this information out could cost you a job. Many companies are committed to active participation in the community, and strongly encourage employees to volunteer. If you want a promotion to a supervisory position but do not have formal or paid experience as a supervisor, use this part of your résumé to show you have related experience in volunteer roles (e.g. coaching softball or hockey, leading Girl Guides, organizing major fund-raising events, recruiting, training and coordinating volunteers for a church project). Under human rights legislation, you are not required to name specific organizations of which you are a member. It may not be in your best interests to say that you are a member of a specific religious or political organization. Use your judgement. It is not necessary to list dates in this section.

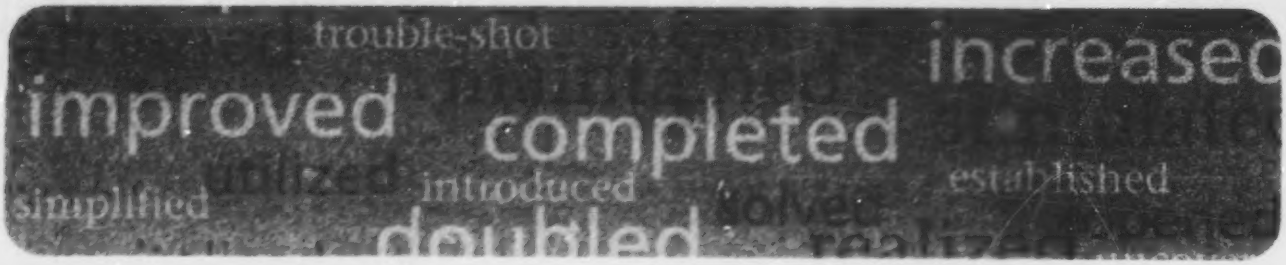


Recreational Activities **Leisure Activities** **Interests** **Hobbies**	This information should be included for several reasons. • It gives employers a glimpse of you as a whole person, not just your professional self. • It supplies information that may help the prospective employer make small talk at the beginning of an interview. • It indicates that you have a balanced lifestyle and recognize the need for recreation and diversion. • Your recreational and leisure interests may involve knowledge and skills relevant to the job. Limit the space you use for this section to two or three lines. Or, combine this section with the previous one under a title such as "Community and Leisure Activities."
References **References will be provided at the interview**	You may choose to list your references and their contact information, or simply state at the end of the résumé "References will be supplied at the interview" or "References available upon request." Not listing names and contact information reduces the length of your résumé. It also allows you to control access to information about your past performance until after you have been interviewed. That way, you cannot be screened out prior to an interview, based on your references. It is generally not recommended to send letters of reference with your résumé because employers often do not put much faith in them. But use your judgement. You may decide to send a reference letter that is particularly relevant. For example, if you lost your last job due to a company merger, downsizing or bankruptcy, it might be worthwhile to include a letter that confirms this reason for termination. Ask for advice about letters of reference when you are researching potential employers. You may find that some employers in your field prefer to have letters included with your résumé.

When you are putting a résumé together, ask yourself if there is any other information you could include that might increase your chances of being considered.

- You may decide to include information about your ability to communicate in another language.

Under human rights legislation, you are not required to reveal that you speak another language. However, that skill could give you an advantage over other applicants. For example, employees who can interpret verbal or written communication in other languages are a definite asset in organizations that deal directly with a wide variety of customers.



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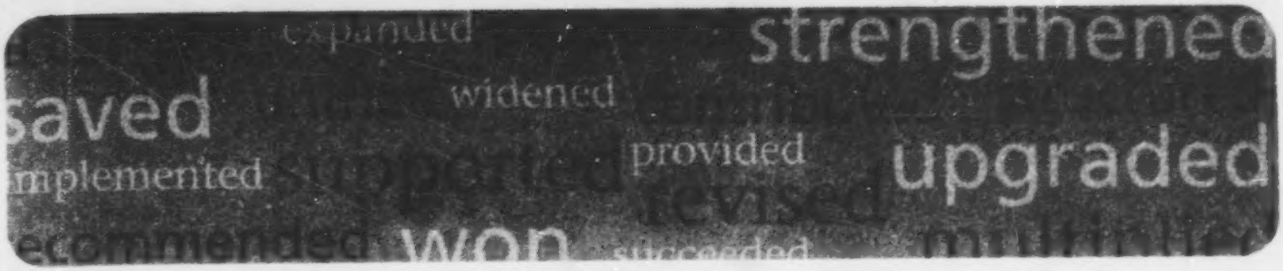
Under human rights legislation, you are not required to reveal that you speak another language. However, that skill could give you an advantage over other applicants. For example, employees who can interpret verbal or written communication in other languages are a definite asset in organizations that deal directly with a wide variety of customers.



- If you feel it would be to your advantage, indicate your immediate availability, or your willingness to travel or relocate. You can mention this in your résumé or your cover letter, or both.

VIDEO

In the video, Frank decides to request a letter of reference from his former employer to confirm that he was laid off for company reasons, not performance-related reasons.

Azim's situation is different. His work references are almost all in Africa. This creates a problem for prospective employers in terms of long distance costs, time differences, and even limited telephone/telecommunications equipment in his country. Azim anticipated these difficulties and has obtained letters from each of his references. He has also added the names of local people he has met through volunteer and community work.

On-line résumés

Did you know there are websites on the Internet that will help you create a résumé? Some websites also let you display your résumé or even send it directly to employers who post jobs on the site. For example, visit Canada's Electronic Labour Exchange www.ele-spe.org.

Although this may sound like an easy way to look for work, there are a couple of things you should consider before you post your résumé on the Internet.

- Unless you are looking for work in a high-tech field, jobs posted on the Internet may also be advertised in newspapers. Jobs posted on the Internet are among the 20 per cent of job openings that are advertised, and competition for them is often keen.
- Be careful about making your personal contact information widely accessible. Use sites that keep personal information confidential until you approve releasing it to specific employers.

Faxing and e-mailing résumés

When you want to get information to an employer right away, you can fax or e-mail it. Then follow up by mailing a print copy. The employer will see your application twice, and at least one copy is sure to be clean and clear.

You may want to e-mail your résumé when:

- an advertised opening lists an e-mail address
- a company you have targeted has a home page with an e-mail address
- you have acquired someone's e-mail address through networking
- you are applying for work in a high-tech field.

The body of your e-mail message should include all of the information normally included in a cover letter.

- Send your résumé as an attachment if you are sure the employer uses the same word processing program you do. If you have a later version, you can convert to the employer's version before sending. To find out what program a company uses, call and ask.
- If you don't know which word processing program an employer uses, attach a plain text version of your résumé. This means sacrificing visual appeal (e.g. special fonts and bolding), but the employer will be able to open your résumé.
- Another possibility is to include your résumé in the body of your message. Type your résumé at the end of your e-mail message, or copy a plain text version into the body of your message.

If appropriate, follow up by calling the company to make sure your résumé was received.

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simplified
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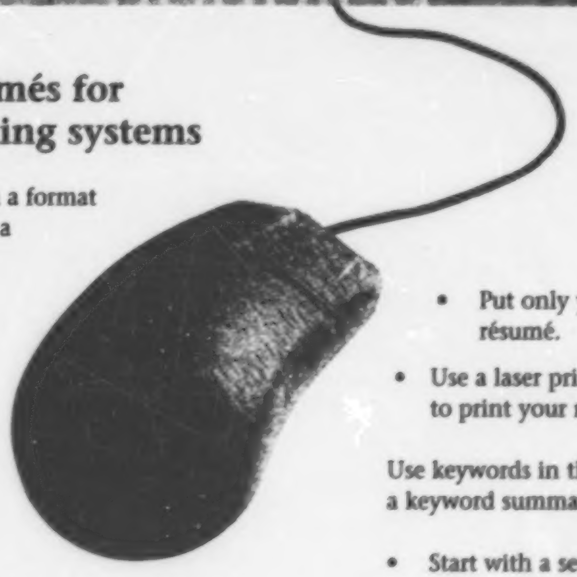
Electronic résumés for applicant tracking systems



Your résumé should be in a format that scans well if there is a possibility that it will be added to a résumé database. Many larger corporations (and smaller ones that use third party résumé handlers) use electronic résumé tracking systems.

An electronic résumé tracking system allows an operator to scan your résumé and store it in a résumé database. E-mailed résumés may go directly into the database. Your résumé is retrieved and reviewed when keywords in your résumé match desired qualifications for a particular job opening.

You can do two things to ensure you will be considered for appropriate positions.

- Use a scannable format (see next section) and/or e-mail your résumé in a plain text format.
- Use as many relevant keywords in your résumé as possible. The words applicant tracking systems use to retrieve relevant résumés are usually nouns (e.g. names of subjects, credentials, tools).

Some of the following tips do not apply to all scanners and applicant tracking systems. However, unless you know the specific requirements of an employer's system, play it safe by following these guidelines.

- Use common, clean-looking fonts in which letters do not touch one another.
- Use 11 to 14 point font sizes (definitely nothing smaller than 10 point).
- Avoid using underlining, italics, boxes and shading, or scrunching text together.
- Put only your name on the first line of your résumé.
- Use a laser printer (black print on white paper) to print your résumé.

Use keywords in the body of your résumé and/or include a keyword summary.

- Start with a section (e.g. "Keyword Summary" or "Field of Work") that focuses on your job target, and any nouns that are not used elsewhere in your résumé to describe your qualifications. Or, add this section at the end of your résumé.
- Use industry jargon and abbreviations, where appropriate. If an employer might scan for a full name or an abbreviation, use both.
- State your qualifications in as many different ways as you can.

Scannable variation of Robert Brown's résumé

Robert Brown

Box 1700
Northern Outpost, Canada
X2Z 2Z2
E-mail: rcbrown@email.ca
Phone: (001) 777-7777

Objective:
Correctional Service Worker, Youth Counsellor, or Program Co-ordinator position working with youth in a correctional institution.

Highlights of Qualifications:
* Several years of professional experience in teaching, coaching and leading sport/recreational programs with young adults in both rural and urban settings
* Strong communication skills and effective listener
* Well-developed observational and assessment abilities
* Good role-playing skills via supportive counselling approach
* Effective recreational leader and organizer in a broad range of sport and related activities

Education

Bachelor of Education Degree
Graduated from ABC University, 1999
Major: Physical Education
Minor: Biological Sciences

High School Diploma
Completed high school requirements in High River, Alberta

First Aid and CPR certification
Standard St. John's Ambulance course, 1998 and 2001

Employment Background

Teacher Practicum
Wetaskiwin Jr./Sr. High School, Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Jan. '99 to June '99
* taught Physical Education Grades 7 through 12
* taught Grade 12 Biology

Range Supervisor
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, June - Aug. '98
* in charge of gathering data on an experimental project dealing with goats

Plotsman
Soils & Crop Research, Agriculture Canada, June to Aug. '97
- maintenance of research plots throughout Alberta

Parks and Recreation Director
Two Hills Recreation Board, June to Aug. '96
- organized, instructed and supervised recreation programs
- planned the construction of a recreation park

Lightning Rod Agent
Alberta Lightning Rod Co. Ltd. Summers of 1990 through 1995
- installed lightning rod protection systems on houses, buildings, etc.

Volunteer Services

Asst. EMT/Driver
Lakeland Ambulance, High River, Sept. 1993 to Sept. 1995
- drove an ambulance and assisted in emergency care of the injured

Sports
- Vice-President, High River Minor Soccer Association, 1994
- Coach, High River Minor Soccer Assoc., 1991 to 1994

Athletic Awards

W.M.A.C. International Brown Belt Champion
World Martial Art Council division one conference champion, 1998 to 2000

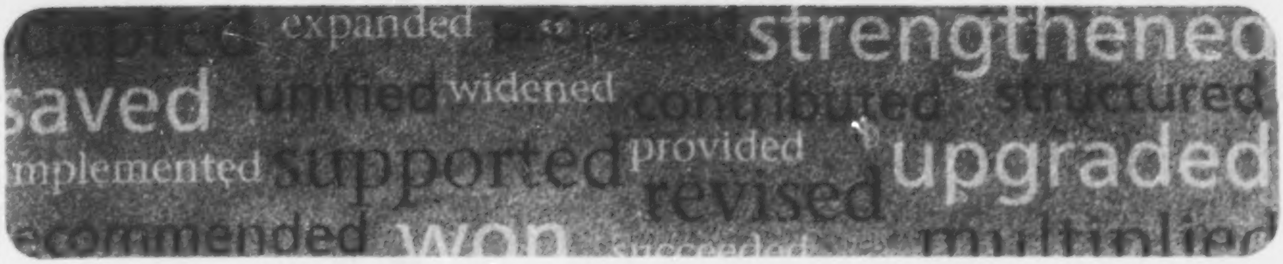
W.M.A.C. Brown Belt World Contender
ranking issued as of Aug. 1996 until title championship 1998

Canadian Amateur Sport Certification Program
Canadian Soccer Assoc. Level 3
Canadian Football Assoc. Level 1
Canadian Basketball Assoc. Level 1
Canadian Gymnastic Assoc. Level 1
Canadian Volleyball Assoc. Level 1

Award of Excellence
Canadian Soccer Association

References

Available upon request



Alternative résumé formats

In some employment fields, a video résumé can be a very effective marketing tool. Video résumés are similar to job interviews. Job seekers introduce themselves on camera, summarize their strongest qualifications (background, skills), and thank employers for their time. Since not all employers have the time or the technology for this approach, it is wise to consider it an option, not your primary strategy.

Another possibility is to use visual presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint) to create a résumé. This strategy is particularly effective if the work you are applying for involves making presentations (e.g. consulting, sales, training positions).

Dealing with Potential Employment Barriers

Following is a list of special circumstances that may be seen as employment barriers, and strategies for overcoming them.

You are qualified, but don't have the specific degree, diploma or experience requested.
Explain how your education and experience relate to the requested qualifications.

There is a huge number of certificate, diploma and degree programs out there, and employers may be familiar primarily with ones that have been offered for a long time. It is your responsibility as a job seeker to sell employers on the suitability and advantages of your training.

Your credentials are from another country.
Ask an appropriate authority, such as a university, professional association or the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS), to evaluate your credentials. Employers will want to know what the Canadian or provincial equivalents would be. Include an official assessment with your résumé, or tell employers you will bring it to an interview.

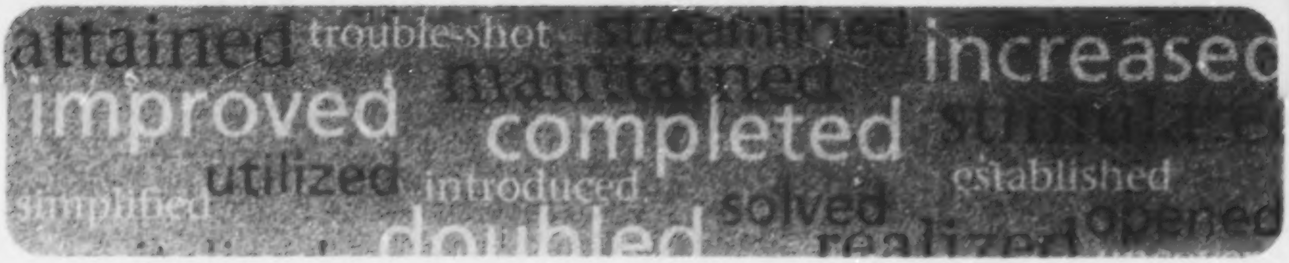
IQAS is a mail-in service only, and charges a fee for reports. For more information, call 427-2655 in Edmonton (dial 310-0000 followed by 427-2655 to call toll-free from anywhere else in Alberta) or visit the IQAS website www.learning.gov.ab.ca/iqas.

VIDEO

Both Frank's education and employment experience are in petroleum engineering, and not obviously relevant to his fundraising job targets. He decides to use a combination résumé starting with a list of his accomplishments and specific skill strengths. Then under "Professional Background" he starts with his fundraising background as follows.

Fundraising

Special Projects Contemporary Ballet Co.



Co-ordinator	January 1995 to present

Designed strategic plans for corporate and private donations fundraising for three consecutive years. Recruited and trained committee volunteers to carry out plans. Succeeded in increasing donations overall by 48 per cent in 1995 and 28 per cent in 1996. Exceeded targets in every division.

United Way	United Way – Petroleum Industry sector
Area Representative	June 1988 to May 1997
	(description of accomplishments)

Management

Manager, Engineering Division	Petroleum XYX Corporation February 1975 to June 1997
	(description of accomplishments)

You do not have a high school diploma

If you have an extensive employment background and/or have demonstrated a range of skills in other types of activities, list them first and your education later in your résumé. Use a heading such as "Education and Development" and list workshops and seminars you have taken, followed simply by "high school."

If you have a post-secondary credential of any kind, it is not necessary to reveal the last year of high school you completed.

Your post-secondary education is incomplete

You could lose an opportunity by describing your post-secondary education simply as a course (e.g. Marketing Research – NAIT – 2001). Marketing Research is a credit course in the NAIT Business Administration diploma program, so list it that way (e.g. NAIT – Business Administration Diploma Program – 2001). This signals that you are in the process of earning a post-secondary credential.

You have been out of the work force for a long time

Even if you have been out of the work force, you may have volunteer or other life experiences that are relevant. Instead of using "Employment Background" as a heading, use "Relevant Experience" and describe your volunteer responsibilities. Include agency names and dates just as you would for paid employment.

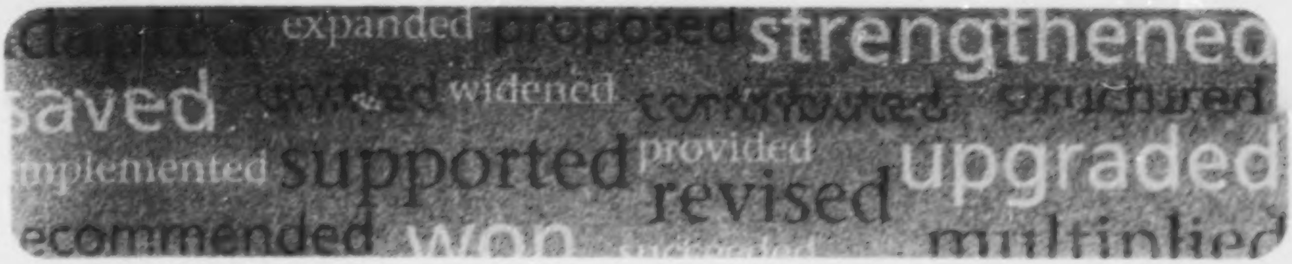
If you have been ill or injured and are now disabled, call the Career Information Hotline and ask about the *Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities*. You can call toll free from anywhere in Alberta by dialing 1-800-661-3753 (in Edmonton call 422-4266). Or, order the appropriate publications via the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop.

Your most relevant experience is not your most recent experience

One way to bring related experience from the past to the foreground is to include a one-line or two-line statement near the top of your résumé under a heading such as "Profile" or "Highlights." Say something positive and relevant to the job such as "Extensive customer service experience" or "Strong computer systems design and consulting skills."

Another approach is to list "Most Relevant Professional Background" first and then "Other Professional Background."

If you let employers know right up front that you have what they are looking for, they will continue reading, looking for further evidence.



You were terminated from your last job

It is ironic, but true, that employers are more likely to see you as a desirable applicant if you are currently employed. If employers can tell from your résumé that you have been unemployed for awhile, they will wonder why. Of course, there are many possibilities that have nothing to do with your capabilities: company merger, temporary position, project employment, downsizing, business failure, etc.

If you provide employment dates, add a short, positive explanation in your résumé or cover letter (e.g. "temporary project position – completed" or "company went out of business" or "downsizing resulted in 33 layoffs").

If you were fired because you did not perform well, saying so will surely result in rejection. Leave your explanation for the interview.

Some employers may discriminate against you on the basis of your gender, age, race, religion or other characteristics

Human rights legislation protects you from having to reveal your age, gender, marital status, number of dependants, religion, nationality or ethnic background. Don't supply this information unless you feel it will enhance your competitiveness.

If you are applying for positions typically performed by members of the opposite sex, providing your full name may work for you or against you. If you think your gender might work against you and you have a gender-specific first name, use only your first initials and surname. On the other hand, if you know an organization is trying to diversify its workforce, use your full name and let the employer know if you are a member of a target group such as Aboriginal people, members of other cultures, or persons with disabilities. This is best done subtly in your cover letter. For example: "In addition to meeting your requirements of having considerable customer service experience, I have an undergraduate degree in economics earned in my native country, Nigeria."

Likewise, you don't have to reveal your age if you feel it could be held against you. If your high school or university graduation year reveals your age, don't supply the date. Your employment information does not have to go all the way back to your first years of employment.

If you are a member of a visible minority, discuss your situation with someone you respect who understands Canadian employers' expectations. For example, a newer Canadian might, because of language differences, reveal spelling or grammar deficiencies in a résumé or cover letter. You can correct such problems by getting feedback from an expert.

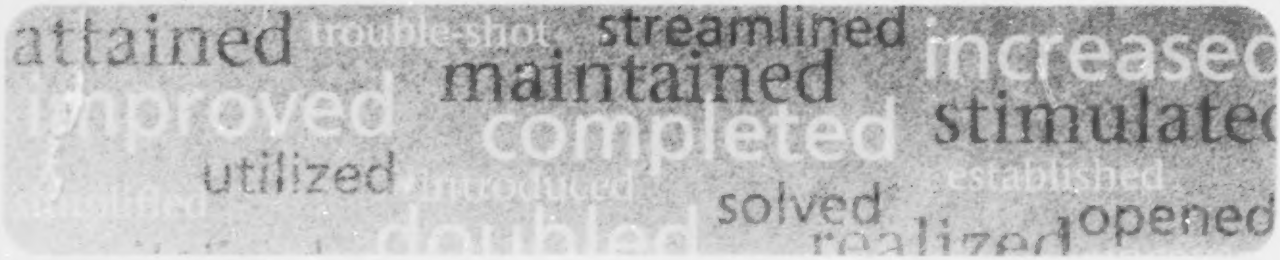
Letters

Cover letters

A résumé should always be accompanied by a cover letter. When you use e-mail to apply for work, follow the same guidelines to compose the body of your e-mail message as you would for a standard cover letter.

A cover letter should attract the employer's attention by:

- stating how you learned about the employment opportunity
- briefly describing the qualifications you have that are most relevant to the opportunity
- telling the employer why you are interested in the job or company.



When writing cover letters, keep the following tips in mind.

- Use the KISSS principle: Keep It Short, Simple and Specific – no more than three paragraphs, and no more than one page in length.
- You may type or handwrite your cover letter, but be sure to comply if the employer specifically asks for one or the other.
- Write the way you would speak. Avoid stuffy, formal words and phrases such as "Enclosed please find." Instead, say something like "I'm keenly interested in ______ and believe I have the qualifications you are looking for."
- Use good quality paper.
- Make sure your letter contains no spelling mistakes or errors in grammar.
- Be original and show enthusiasm.

The contents of your cover letter should flow in the following order:

First paragraph
State how you learned about the job and/or why you are applying. What is it about the job or company that interests you?

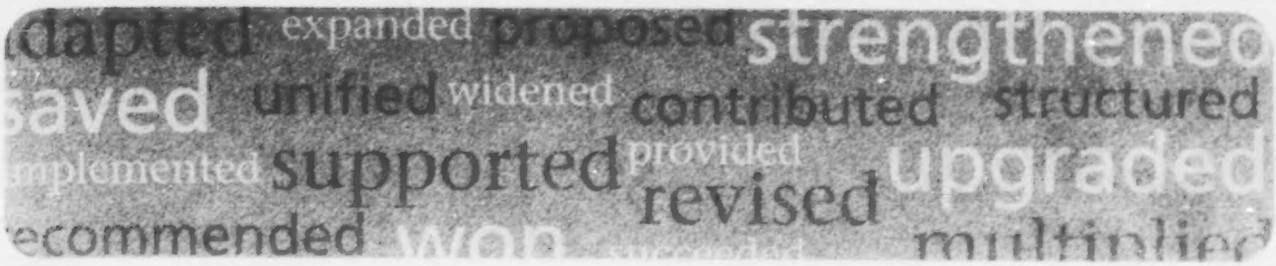
Second paragraph
Emphasize the specific knowledge and skills that make you a strong candidate for the job.

Don't repeat information that is in your résumé (e.g. "I have a Word Processing diploma and three years of experience."). Instead, summarize by saying something like "I am well-qualified for the job based on my seven years of related experience." Then emphasize particular strengths you have to offer relative to the job. For example, "Your description of the 'ideal' candidate highlighted enthusiasm and strong interpersonal communication skills. These are strengths I would bring to the position. In addition, I have frequently been commended for my effectiveness in dealing with difficult customer situations."

Closing paragraph
Describe in assertive, positive language what you expect will happen or what you plan to do next.

- If you are responding to an advertisement, include a statement such as "I look forward to meeting you to discuss my suitability for this position."
- If you are sending an unsolicited résumé, write something like "I will contact you early in the week of June 12 to set up an appointment with you. I look forward to discussing possible employment with (name of organization)."

Following are two examples of effective cover letters.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revised
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multiplied

12345 - 678 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5T 5T5

October 20, 2001

Regional Telephone
9999 - 99 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T4T 4T4

Dear Sir/Madam:

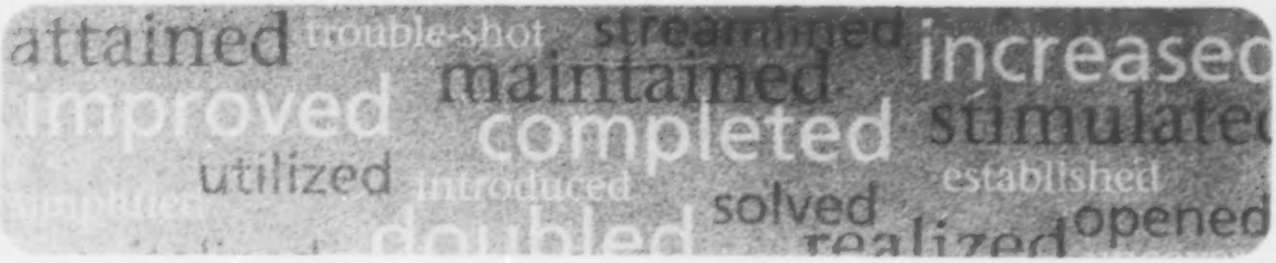
Subject: Marketing Representative

Your ad in the October 20 *Globe and Mail* caught my interest. At this time in my career, I am looking for new challenges and an opportunity to combine my effective marketing skills with my interest in telecommunications. I understand that Regional Telephone is currently introducing some innovative marketing strategies to expand its markets, and I would very much like to be involved in this exciting endeavour.

My résumé is enclosed for your review. I am hard-working and ambitious, and have excellent communication and organization skills. I also have a Bachelor of Business Administration degree.

I am eager to meet you in a personal interview to discuss this or other employment opportunities with Regional Telephone.

Sincerely,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established
simplified
solved
doubled
realized
opened

12345 - 678 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5T 5T5

October 6, 2001

Bissell, Brown and Best
9999 - 99 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T4T 4T4

Dear Sir/Madam:

Subject: Administrative Assistant

When I was reviewing the professional/administrative position opportunities advertised in today's *Globe and Mail*, your ad stood out from the others. I am replying with enthusiasm to what appears to be a job made for me.

I exceed your requirements as stated. With over five years of progressively more responsible, directly-related work experience with a major law firm, I am able to handle a high volume of diversified office responsibilities with a minimum of supervision. I believe I can contribute significantly to your law practice through my efficient, cost-saving and support-oriented approach. I have always enjoyed excellent working relationships at work, as my references can attest.

I look forward to meeting you in an interview.

Sincerely,

Letters of reference

Letters of reference are typewritten business letters:

- from your references
- to employers
- about you.

There are two kinds of letters of reference. A work reference letter and a personal reference letter. Work references are people who have worked with you and will talk about your knowledge, skills and experience. Personal references are people who know you but have not supervised your work on the job, at school or in volunteer situations. They cannot speak to your performance, but can provide important character references.

When you ask people to write letters of reference for you, be specific. In addition to providing specific information about where to send letters (name and address, including postal code), tell your references why you need the letter and give them a copy of your résumé.

If you want a work reference, let your references know what knowledge, skills and experience you want to emphasize. Their letters should confirm and support what you say in your cover letter and résumé (or application form).

If you want a letter of reference for a particular employment opportunity, tell your references what you know about the opportunity. If possible, show them the job ad or posting.

If you want a letter of reference that you can show to a number of employers, it will have to be more general. However, it is still important to give your references as much information as possible about your work search targets. This will help them decide what information about your character, skills and performance to stress in their letters.

Broadcast letters and letters of inquiry

If you would like to work for a particular company or type of business, you may be able to create an opportunity or job lead. Contact the company in person, by phone or in writing, and let them know of your interest and what you have to offer.

Writing a letter is a good way to introduce yourself and explain why it would be mutually beneficial for you to meet.

This sample was written to explore a possible opportunity, after the writer read a news article.

August 1, 2001

Ms. Jane Austen
Chairman of Board
Theatre YYY
Everytown, Canada
T5T 5T5

Dear Ms. Austen:

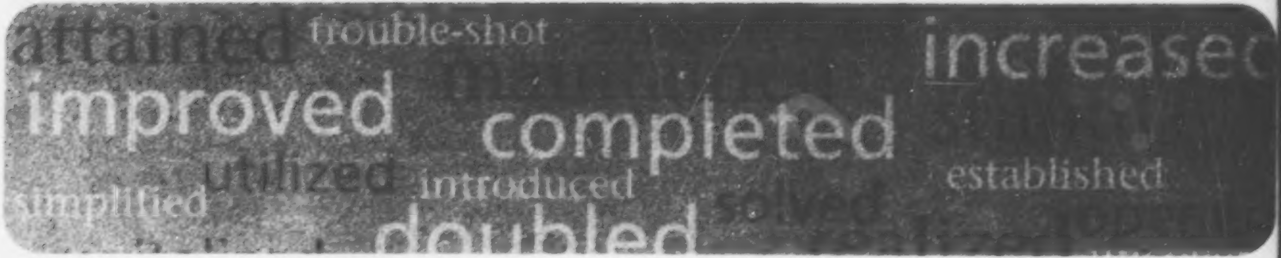
Subject: Artistic Director

I was surprised at your current director's decision to resign as a result of the Board's decision to change the artistic program for this season. His contribution to Theatre YYY's success has been significant.

I am interested in meeting with you to discuss how I might fill your immediate need for a replacement. An experienced director, I have succeeded in increasing ticket sales by as much as 78 per cent in one season as a result of my commitment to audience program interests, and my strong casting, directing and creative marketing skills. I would welcome the opportunity to work with you to (1) solve the financial difficulties you and the Board are currently facing, and (2) help you continue to produce the fine quality of theatre for which your company is recognized.

I will contact you on Monday to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,



Thank you notes

Handwritten thank you notes are a good way to let people know you appreciate their help or consideration. Use personal stationery or small note paper to thank people who:

- invite you to come in for an interview
- agree to meet with you to give you information or suggestions related to your job search
- give you job leads
- turn you down for a job.

Thank you notes make a very favorable impression and are a powerful way to make you memorable.

When you are advised that you are not the successful candidate in a job competition, write a thank you note that politely and briefly expresses your disappointment, reinforces your continued interest in the company, and thanks the interviewer(s) for the opportunity to discuss your background.

Dear ________________:

I really appreciate the time and interest you gave me Tuesday. Our discussion was both helpful and inspiring for me. Looking for work is challenging, to say the least. Your feedback and leads have given me renewed optimism.

I have already contacted John Ormsky at National Energy, as you suggested. We have a meeting scheduled for Friday.

Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Dear ________________:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss (position) on Tuesday.

I am more convinced than ever that I would be able to contribute to your objectives. Please feel free to call if there is any additional information I can supply to help you in your decision-making.

Sincerely,

Other Marketing Tools

Application forms

Many organizations expect job seekers to fill out an employment application form. They may or may not expect you to submit a résumé as well.

When you are asked to complete an application form, ask if it would be acceptable to attach your résumé and only fill in your name, contact information, the position applied for and competition number.

Some employers may want you to complete the entire application form, and reject your application if you do not. In this case, complete each section of the form in full. If you feel certain questions violate human rights, you may decide to:

- leave a blank
- put a question mark after an offending question
- write something like "will provide at time of hire."

M121

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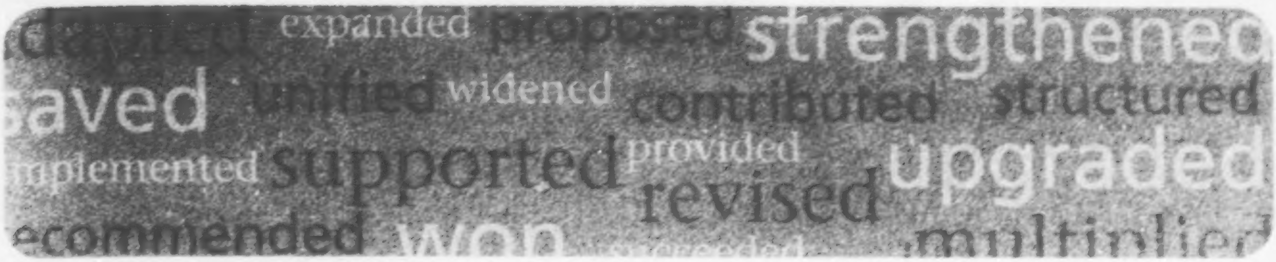


Information relating to marital status, number of dependants and age is needed once you are hired for purposes of income tax deductions and benefits administration. But it is inappropriate for a company to ask job applicants for this information.

If you are applying for entry-level positions that require some post-secondary education, employers may ask for a completed CACEE application. A CACEE application is a generic application form developed by the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE - pronounced 'Casey'). You can find these forms in print and electronic formats at most campus career centres, and on the CACEE website www.cacee.com in the "Students and Recent Grads" section of the website.

Curriculum vitae

A curriculum vitae (pronounced vee-tie), sometimes called a CV, is a longer, more comprehensive document than a résumé.

Résumé	Curriculum Vitae
Generally 1 to 2 pages long	May be 3 to 10 pages long
Summary of relevant qualifications	Comprehensive listing of qualifications
Used in most fields of work	Used for academic and international positions
Used to quickly screen candidates	Used to study credentials and biographical information

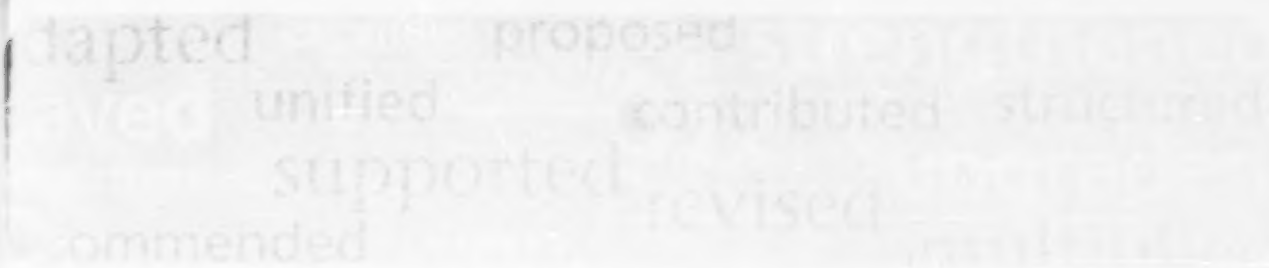
The information you should include in a CV depends on where you will be sending it. If you are applying for an academic position in North America, include the following information:

- name and contact information
- objective
- summary of qualifications
- summary of skills
- education, including degrees, specialization, post-graduate and post-doctoral studies and dissertations
- professional background, including job titles and employers
- research projects, grants, inventions
- publications you have written
- public presentations and appearances
- honours, awards, distinctions and achievements
- professional designations and affiliations.

If you are applying for work outside North America, add the following information:

- personal information considered to be discriminatory in Canada (age and marital status) and personal attributes, with supporting evidence in the form of work-related examples and quotes from employers, co-workers, customers and people who have status and authority (e.g. religious leaders, political officials)
- volunteer and public service experience
- hobbies and leisure activities, especially ones that demonstrate your ability to adapt to different cultures.

Add "excellent health" to your personal information if this is true.



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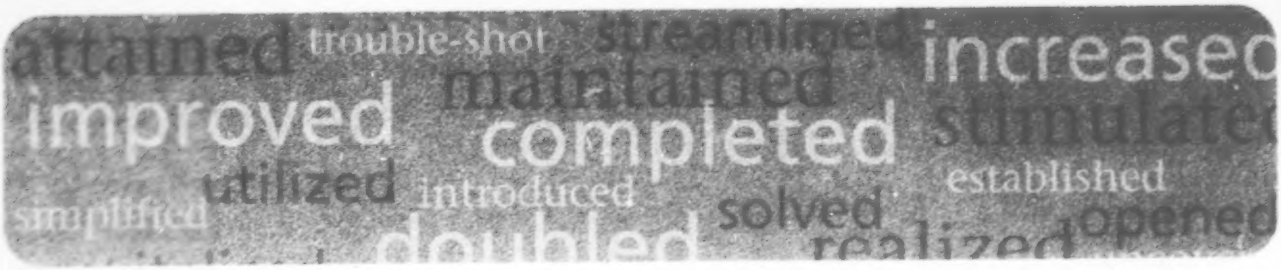
- professional background, including job titles and employers
- research projects, grants, inventions
- publications you have written
- public presentations and appearances
- honours, awards, distinctions and achievements
- professional designations and affiliations.

If you are applying for work outside North America, add the following information:

- personal information considered to be discriminatory in Canada (age and marital status) and personal attributes, with supporting evidence in the form of work-related examples and quotes from employers, co-workers, customers and people who have status and authority (e.g. religious leaders, political officials)
- volunteer and public service experience
- hobbies and leisure activities, especially ones that demonstrate your ability to adapt to different cultures.

Add "excellent health" to your personal information if this is true.

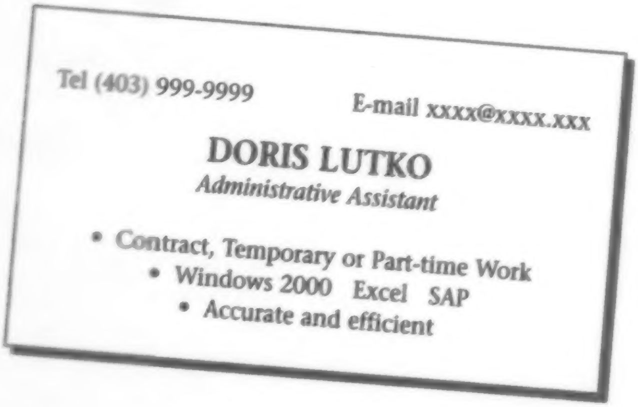


When you are writing a curriculum vitae, use the same care selecting, organizing and wording your CV as you would when writing a résumé.

- Be specific – provide names, titles, places and dates.
- If your CV is more than four pages long, include an executive summary at the beginning.
- Have your CV translated to the language of the receiving country if English is not widely used there.

Business cards

When you talk to people, give them a business card so they can contact you when they hear something that might be helpful to you.


Tel (403) 999-9999
E-mail xxxx@xxxx.xxx

DORIS LUTKO
Administrative Assistant

- Contract, Temporary or Part-time Work
- Windows 2000 Excel SAP
- Accurate and efficient

You can create business cards on a computer. However, the perforated paper used for printing computer-generated cards often looks and feels home-made. For a more professional look, have business cards printed at an office supply store that will print a large number of cards for a reasonable price.

Keep your business card simple, tasteful and consistent with the tone and style of others in your employment field. A small graphic or border may enhance the look of your card.

Include the following information on your card.

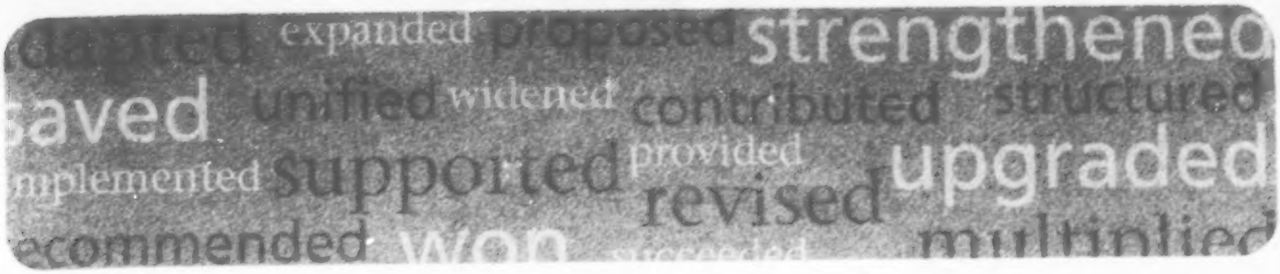
- Your name, followed by a professional designation, college diploma, or university degree if you have one.
- Your field of work (e.g. Mechanical Engineer, Health Care Professional, Adult Educator, Administrative Assistant, Musician, Sales Representative).
- Your contact information (telephone number, fax number, cell phone number and/or e-mail address).
- Your company name, if you have your own company.
- Up to three points that describe your work, skills and/or characteristics.

If you are self-employed or do contract work, a business card is a must. If you need more space to describe your products or services, develop a brochure as well.

Portfolios

An employment portfolio is a portable collection of items that demonstrate your skills. Building a portfolio allows you to show employers what you can do, instead of simply talking about your skills. Concrete evidence can be much more impressive and convincing than verbal descriptions.

1. To start building a portfolio, look for items that show you have the skills that are required in your field (e.g. certificates, awards, things you have written or created, letters of commendation, positive performance appraisals, newsletter articles by you or about you, copies of presentations and publications, pictures or brochures about projects you have



completed on your own or with others). You decide what reflects your unique qualities best and therefore what should go in your portfolio.

2. Organize/display your portfolio items. For example, you might use:
   - a file folder with pockets
   - a binder with dividers and pages in plastic sleeves to protect them from spills and finger marks
   - a computer disk
   - an audio or videotape.

   Take the time required to do a professional looking job of organizing and displaying your samples. Your portfolio should illustrate your high work standards and create a good impression of your abilities.

3. When you meet with an employer, take items from your portfolio with you. Select the best and most recent examples of your most relevant skills.

You can use your portfolio when you are networking, applying for work or being interviewed. You decide when it will be to your advantage to show your portfolio. When you do, tell stories associated with each item and emphasize the skills you used (e.g. problem-solving skills, communication skills). Use the S.T.A.R. storytelling method.

Situation	Describe the situation
Task:	Explain what had to be done and the challenges involved
Activities:	Talk about how you handled the situation and what you did
Result:	Describe what happened as a result of your efforts

Practice by recording your stories on tape, or role-playing with supportive friends and relatives.

VIDEO

Frank could show a poster, article or invitation from a fundraising event he organized. He could talk about the specific challenges and goals of the campaign, what he did to organize and run an event, and the amount of money the campaign generated.

If you have the necessary hardware and software, consider the possibility of creating an electronic portfolio. Scan copies of pictures and textual documents to create a "portfolio on a disk" or a combination portfolio-résumé that you can leave with employers. Make the file "read-only" so it cannot be altered.

If you work in a field such as performing arts or education, consider the possibility of creating a videotape of you in action. A video can be a very powerful marketing tool, but preparing one can be time-consuming and expensive. Only you can decide if the potential benefit might be worth the cost.

Proposals

Work does not always come packaged in the form of a job. When you are networking and information interviewing, you may be asked if you would be interested in taking on a project on a contract basis. If you would, you will probably be asked to submit a proposal. There are three basic types of proposals.

1. Business letter confirming a verbal agreement

You and an employer have discussed a project and agreed to proceed. Follow up by sending a letter that confirms your agreement, and outlines what you have agreed to do and the compensation you will receive.

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2. Solicited proposal

You have received a written or verbal Request for Proposals (RFP). Other contractors have probably received the same RFP and will probably submit proposals too. The following information should be included in your proposal:

- background information and rationale for the project
- project objectives
- how objectives will be met
- your expertise and qualifications for the project
- timelines: when the project will begin, deadlines for each step, and completion deadline
- expenses to be paid by the employer (if any) and your fee
- your name and contact information (use your own letterhead, if you have one)
- any other information requested in the RFP.

Proposals that do not conform to content and format guidelines specified in an RFP (e.g. do not include requested information, or go over a maximum length) may not be considered.

If accepted, your proposal will probably become part of a written contract.

3. Unsolicited proposal

In your discussions with employers, you may meet an employer who is struggling with a problem that you are uniquely qualified to solve. If so, you may be able to create a work opportunity for yourself by submitting an unsolicited proposal.

Your proposal could take the form of a brief, concise letter that includes the following information:

- background information such as a reference to previous discussions with the employer
- a very short description of the challenge the employer is facing and desired outcomes
- some suggestions for a course of action
- your special qualifications (skills, experience) for the action you propose
- when you could begin and complete the project
- the fees/expenses you would charge
- when you will contact the employer to follow up.

Be careful. Do not provide all the details of your proposed course of action. The employer could take your ideas and ask an employee or someone else to implement them.

The chances of an unsolicited proposal being accepted are much lower than a solicited one. However, if you have discussed the situation with company personnel and are sure the company would be receptive to a proposal, you may decide that the potential benefit is worth investing some of your time and energy.

Like a résumé and cover letter, a proposal is a marketing tool. Follow the same guidelines as you would for writing a cover letter.

If possible, deliver your proposal in person, or by mail or courier. Faxing or e-mailing your proposal may result in your proposal looking less visually attractive than it should. If appropriate, enclose your business card and/or a brochure about your business.

Here is an illustration of a short solicited proposal.

PROPOSAL FOR PROJECT A
for
XYZ COMPANY

The introductory paragraph/section should include the name of the project and any relevant background information. You may refer to the need that prompted the proposal, and the purpose of the project. Or, you can list project objectives separately.

Objectives

In point form, list the objectives of the project.

- Make sure you address all of the requirements described in the RFP.
- It is generally not advisable to add objectives that are not included in the RFP.
- Start each item with an active phrase such as "to develop" or "to enhance."

In a simple proposal, the project objectives and your work plan may be the same.

Work Plan

Explain and describe exactly what you will do.

- Avoid misunderstandings by being as specific as you can.
- Use names and numbers.
- Make sure you can do what you say you will do, in the time allowed.

Your proposal may become part of a contract, or may be quoted in a contract. The terms of your contract should be as clear as possible, so there is never any question about what you have (and have not) agreed to do.

Outline of Your Qualifications

This section is not necessary if you are writing a letter confirming a verbal agreement.

- List only qualifications relevant to the project.
- Be clear and concise.
- This is where you should emphasize your expertise.

Timelines

If completion of some part of the proposed work is dependent on the work of others, state that your timelines are based on the assumption that their work will be completed by a specified date.

- State when you can begin the project.
- State when you will complete the project.
- Include deadlines for the completion of any intermediate steps.

Fees

If you are not sure how much to charge, ask what kind of a budget the company has in mind, or ask people who have done similar contracts or projects for some guidelines.

- State whether you will charge a flat fee or an hourly fee.
- Indicate if fees are to be paid in a lump sum at the end of the project, or paid in partial payments as various tasks are completed.
- Separate fees from expenses.
- Specify what the employer will be expected to pay for.
- Don't forget travel, meal or accommodation costs, if applicable.

Contact Information

Be sure to include your name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address if applicable. Sign the letter accompanying the proposal, or the proposal if it is in letter format.

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Marketing Strategies

Here are some creative ways to use your marketing tools to tap into the hidden job market (the 80 per cent of employment opportunities that are never advertised).

- Give a copy of your résumé and/or business card to all of your contacts. The more informed they are about you, the more effectively they can promote you.
- Set up information gathering interviews with key decision makers in the companies and industries that interest you most. Leave your résumé, business card and/or copies of portfolio items with them.
- Target specific organizations/businesses and deliver your résumé personally, or mail it with a letter expressing your interest and motivation. Indicate when you will follow up with a phone call.
- Use your résumé to acquire a volunteer position that will give you experience in a particular area.
- Contact personnel agencies or executive search firms in your area. Becoming part of their applicant inventory may lead to a job that you would not have heard about otherwise. Find out which agencies charge applicants a fee to register.
- If you are in a field where there is an established professional association, contact the association regarding job leads. Watch for leads in professional newsletters. Consider placing an ad promoting your services and strengths. Attend association meetings to expand your network of contacts.
- The more employers you meet personally, the better. So resist the temptation to simply mail out a number of résumés. Instead, write broadcast letters and letters of inquiry expressing interest in specific organizations and requesting an interview. Include just enough information about your background to stimulate their curiosity. Promise to follow up with a phone call to establish a meeting time.
- If you are interested in working on a contract basis, develop a promotional brochure or flyer to introduce yourself to prospective customers and establish your credibility.

A tip about timing

Many job seekers convince themselves that there is not much happening in the job market just before or during holidays. Or they wait for the career ads in the Saturday paper and don't bother with the mid-week help wanted ads.

Sometimes, employers cannot delay filling important position vacancies. When you respond to ads during holiday periods, you may have an advantage because you have less competition. **Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.**

PART 3

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

If you have done a good job of networking and preparing your marketing tools (résumés, cover letters, portfolio, etc.), you will very likely be asked to come in for a number of interviews.

Two basic questions are behind many of the questions employers ask in interview situations.

1. What do you have to offer?
2. Why do you want this job?

To do well in an employment interview, you have to be prepared to answer these fundamental questions. Part 1 of this workbook dealt with identifying your skills, wants and needs. Parts 2 and 3 deal with making connections between what you want and have to offer with what specific employers want and have to offer. In particular, this part is about making those connections in face-to-face meetings with employers.

Research confirms that applicants who take the time to find out something about the employer are more likely to get the job. Having done your homework impresses employers because it indicates a genuine interest in the job.

Gathering Information

There are many ways to gather information about an organization.

- Use an Internet search engine to find the organization's website, if it has one, and other sites that mention the organization. Some organizations publish information about their goals and objectives and organizational structure, as well as information about products or services.
- Larger organizations often have Public Affairs or Communications departments that distribute information about the organization (e.g. information about programs, services, financial situation, contributions to the community). Phone and ask for copies of this information, or pick it up in person.
- Do some research at your local public library or Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre. To find out where the nearest Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre is located, call the Career Information Hotline toll free from anywhere in Alberta at 1-800-661-3753 (in Edmonton, call 422-4266), or visit the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website www.alis.gov.ab.ca.
- Talk to the people in charge of the resource collections you visit. Explain that you are preparing for an interview and would like to find as much recent information about an organization as possible. They may be able to direct you to the organization's annual report (if it is a large organization) or other sources of information (e.g. magazine or news articles).
- Ask your friends, family and other contacts what they know about the organization. If they know someone who works there, that person could be a valuable source of information. Receptionists and secretaries may also provide information and/or the names of people who could tell you more about the organization.
- Contact your local Chamber of Commerce to find out if it has information about the organization.

Sometimes, interviewers ask job applicants what they have done to prepare for an interview. Answers to this question reveal a great deal about applicants: their interests and motivations, planning and research skills, communication and people skills, organizational abilities, determination and resourcefulness.

The more you know about an organization, the more confident you will feel going into an interview.

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What to Expect

When you are invited to come in for an interview, ask for the names and positions of the interviewers. This will give you an idea of what type of interview to expect.

- **Screening interviews** are usually conducted by personnel representatives to determine if you have the basic requirements for the job. They may be conducted in person or over the phone. If successful, you will be asked to come in for another interview, this time with the hiring manager(s).

  Many employers screen on the basis of your résumé and cover letter, and conduct just one interview. The interviewer first explores your academic background and experience, then proceeds to a more in-depth assessment of your suitability for the job based on attitude, motivation and past performance.

- **Panel interviews** are conducted by a group of representatives from an organization. For example, interviews may be conducted by a combination of people from the personnel office and the department in which the successful candidate will work. In the not-for-profit sector, entire boards sometimes participate in the hiring process rather than delegate this responsibility.

  At the beginning of a panel interview, ensure that you are seated where you can make eye contact with all panel members. If you know the names and positions of the interviewers ahead of time, you can identify the person you would be reporting to, if successful.

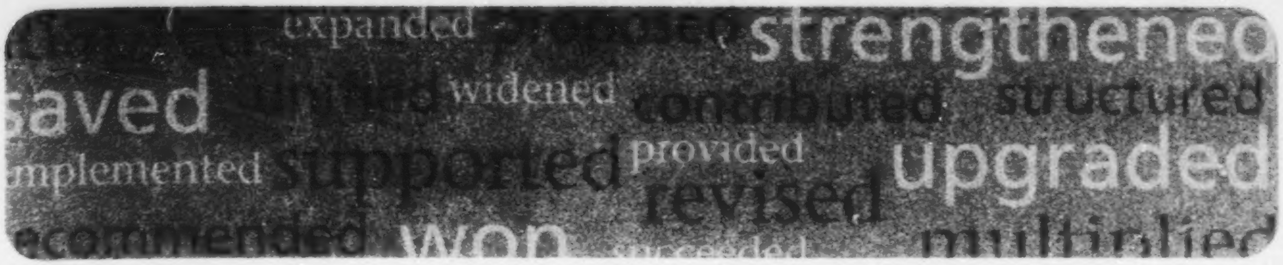
- **Serial interviews** are common in larger organizations. If you succeed at one level, you are then referred to another individual or panel for the next stage.

  You might have anywhere from three to eight separate interviews. Some may take place in informal settings such as a restaurant. Or, you may be asked to tour the physical plant, stopping along the way to meet company personnel. You will be assessed throughout the process to determine how well you would fit in.

- **Video interviews** are sometimes conducted to screen applicants or interview applicants from a distance. Some employers ask job seekers to respond to a list of questions on video before inviting them for a second interview in person. Or, using video teleconferencing, employers may interview job seekers live from a different location. For example, you could be in Edmonton and the interviewer in Toronto, both seated in front of computer terminals equipped with cameras and sound equipment.

Well-planned interviews are usually conducted in the following sequence. However, not all employers are good interviewers. If you encounter someone who is not, you may have to gently guide the conversation yourself to make sure the employer realizes how your qualifications relate to the requirements of the position.

- Interviews generally start with introductions and some polite conversation to put everyone at ease. If an interviewer forgets to introduce him/herself or other panel members, inquire politely about their names and their roles with the company.
- Usually, the interviewer will give you an idea of what will happen in the interview and how long it will be. You should expect to do 80 per cent of the talking.
- The interviewer will probably begin with general, open-ended questions about your background and progress to more specific questions.
- After interviewers have asked their questions, they will probably give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the job and/or organization.
- To signal that the interview is just about over, the interviewer might say, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us?" If not, the interviewer will close the interview with a cordial statement such as "We appreciate your interest in the job (organization)



and thank you for coming to an interview. You can expect to hear from us by next Tuesday." If you are not given information regarding the next step, ask when you might expect to hear from the interviewer. Then thank the interviewer(s) for the opportunity to meet with them, and leave in a business-like manner.

Before or after an interview, you may be asked to complete other recruitment requirements. For example, you may be asked to:

- submit samples of your work
- show your driver's licence, submit an abstract of your driving record, or provide evidence of academic qualifications, professional memberships or licences
- demonstrate job-related skills (e.g. write something, based on supplied information)
- submit a sample of your handwriting for character analysis
- take a written aptitude test
- take a test to evaluate your technical expertise
- undergo psychological testing.

Any tests you are asked to take should be relevant to the job, and administered to all applicants. Find out as much as possible about these tests, and if it is possible to prepare for them.

Interview questions

The best way to prepare for an interview is to anticipate what you will be asked, and write down or record your responses. Listen to yourself on a tape recorder. If you feel you need to improve, practise on tape so you can hear how much you are improving.

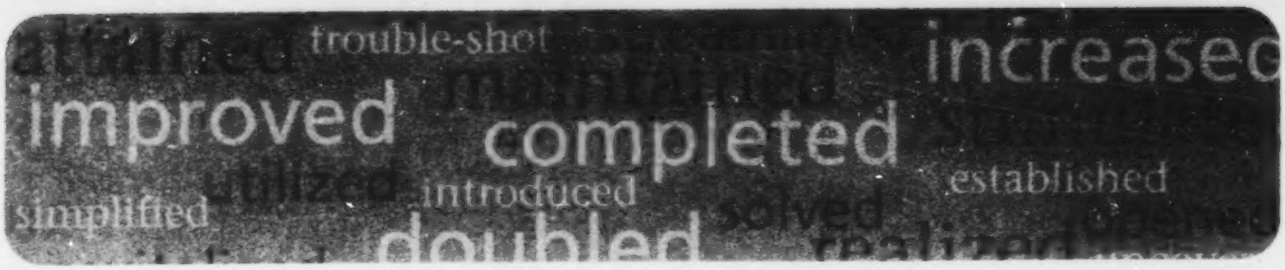
The vast majority of questions you will be asked are ones you can anticipate fairly easily. For example, you will probably be asked questions about your:

- education, training, previous employment, and volunteer or community activities
- career plans and how the position relates to your plans
- interest in the job and company
- strengths and weaknesses
- knowledge, skills and abilities
- expectations of your boss and the organization
- your supervisory/management style (if the job requires supervising/managing others)
- flexibility and adaptability
- health (i.e. your ability to show up for work and be productive)
- availability to start work
- reasons for leaving previous employers
- reasons for pursuing particular goals, training or leisure activities
- salary background and expectations.

Interviewers consistently report that one of the toughest questions for most job seekers to answer well is the implied question, "Tell me about yourself." Your response to this commonly-used conversation starter will tell interviewers at lot about:

- how well you deal with ambiguity
- your organizational skills
- your ability to anticipate what they need to know about you
- your ability to evaluate what is most important and summarize.

Resist the impulse to respond by asking "What do you want to know?" Instead, imagine the interviewer asked, "How would you describe your background and how it has prepared you for this job?" That is what they are really asking.



Your response should stimulate interest in you. Avoid making general statements about your background and assuming that experience equals demonstrated competence. Having done something does not mean you did it well. Talk about the results you have achieved.

Don't say
"Well, I have seven years of experience in accounting for oilfield supply companies, including supervising four clerical support staff for three years. My academic background includes a NAIT Business Administration diploma in accounting and I've completed the fourth level of CGA certification."

Do say
"Firstly, I've always been attracted to working with numbers and financial analysis. I started my post-secondary education by completing a NAIT Business Administration diploma, majoring in accounting. After I graduated, I applied to XYZ Oil Services and was chosen out of 48 applicants for the position of Office Manager. In the seven years I've been there, I've been given more responsibility and three promotions. I feel I've contributed significantly to the company's profitability. I've recently completed the fourth level CGA, and will write the final in May."

In the second response, the candidate offers a great deal of relevant information regarding his interests, motivation, ability to set goals and follow through on them, academic and job related accomplishments, initiative, creativity, promotability, and willingness to take on new challenges.

If you have done the exercises in Part 1 of this workbook to identify your skills, strengths and accomplishments, you have the information you need to prepare responses to the following tough interview questions.

Why should we hire you?
What would you bring to this job?
Why do you want this job?
Why do you want to leave your current job?
Why did you leave your last job?
What are your strengths?
What are your weaknesses?
What did you like about your last job?
What did you dislike?
Tell us about a time when you didn't handle a situation well, and what you learned from it.

Questions about dislikes and weaknesses may seem to go against your purpose (selling yourself). "Weakness" here means a job related knowledge or skill deficiency – an area you need to develop.

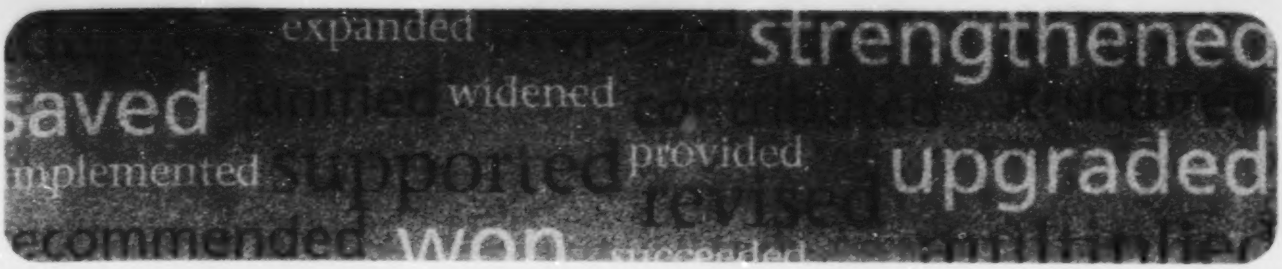
Acknowledge that you are not perfect. Identify a weakness or two that would not be a problem for this job, and explain how you are working to improve. For example, if you are being interviewed for a supervisory position, don't say, "I've never supervised anyone." Instead, say something like "Although I have limited supervisory experience, I am taking a supervisory development certificate at university and have some leadership experience in my community league."

VIDEO

When asked about weaknesses, Frank and Azim might respond as follows.

Frank: "Weakness? My paid experience is all in the oil industry. But my leadership and organizational skills fit anywhere. And I've shown what I can do in fundraising."

Azim: "I have a lot to learn about Canadian ways, but I am a good student and eager to learn. I have a good Canadian support group of personal coaches. Although I speak differently than most Canadians, people don't have a problem understanding me."



The toughest questions will be the ones you haven't anticipated or prepared for. For many job applicants, hypothetical questions and behaviour-descriptive questions fall in this category. For example, an interviewer might ask how you would handle a particular type of stressful situation (a hypothetical question), or ask you to describe how you handled a stressful experience at work (a behaviour-descriptive question). In the process of responding, you reveal something about the kinds of situations that are stressful for you and how you deal with them.

Employers ask hypothetical and behaviour-descriptive questions to find out how you would handle situations you are likely to encounter on the job. For example, if the work sometimes requires dealing with disgruntled customers who may become loud and verbally abusive, the employer needs to know how you would react. To find out, the interviewer may ask what you would do in that situation, or ask you to describe a time in your last job when a customer got really angry.

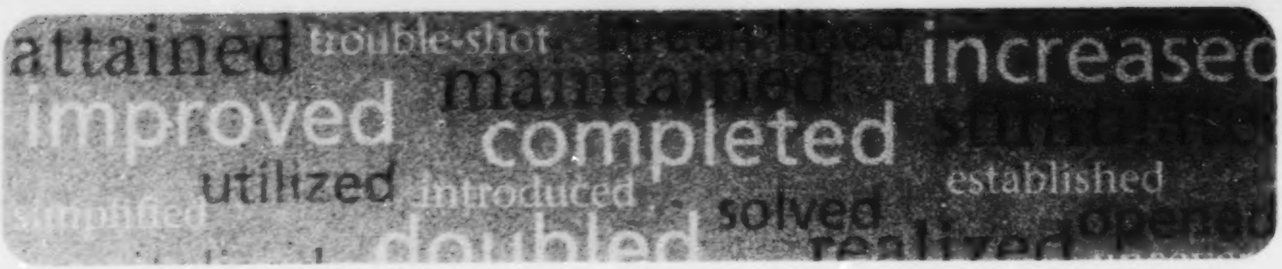
After giving you a minute to think of a situation and listening carefully to your story, the interviewer will follow up with specific questions about how you handled the situation and what happened as a result of what you did.

Tips for handling hypothetical and behaviour-descriptive questions

- Before an interview, analyze the information you have gathered about the organization and the work, and try to anticipate situations you might encounter on the job. Think about how you have handled similar situations in the past, and how you might have handled them better. Select situations in which your behaviour contributed to a positive outcome, and use the S.T.A.R. story-telling method to develop brief descriptions of those situations.
- If you are caught off guard by a hypothetical or behaviour-descriptive question in an interview, think through your answer before you say anything. Good interviewers will not give you any clues as to what they think the "right answer" is, so all you can do is answer honestly.
- When asked to describe situations you have actually experienced, volunteer information only about situations you handled well. Interviewers who ask behaviour-descriptive questions believe that how you reacted in the past is a good predictor of how you will react in the future. They may disregard anything you say about how you would handle the situation differently next time.
- Do not make up an answer to a behaviour-descriptive question. The interviewer will follow up by asking detailed questions about the situation, what you did and what happened as a result. You will appear dishonest, and therefore not trustworthy, if you cannot answer these questions without hesitation.

To practice answering behaviour-descriptive questions, consider how you would respond to the following questions.

- Please give us an example of a work situation where you feel your coping skills were really tested, and tell us how you handled it.
- Describe a situation where a fellow worker or supervisor had expectations that you felt were unfair or unrealistic. How did you deal with that?
- Can you identify a work-related situation where you recognized a problem and initiated some action to correct the problem?
- Give us an example of some research you have done. How did you find specific resources? What were your findings and conclusions? What did you decide or recommend as a result of your research?
- Give us an example of a time when you conformed to a policy that you did not agree with. What was your rationale?



- Can you describe a group situation where you were the only dissenter or person with an opposing viewpoint? How did you handle it? What were the results?

If success on the job requires handling stressful situations calmly and effectively, an interviewer may actually try to provoke you to see how well you handle the situation. You have nothing to gain and everything to lose by getting angry, or letting your disappointment show if you think the interview is not going well. No matter what happens in an interview, remain calm, composed and confident – or at least try to look like you are.

Questions you should ask

Towards the end of an interview, employers often ask if you have any questions about the company or the job. If you say "no" – which is what most people do – you may be sending the wrong signals. Employers may assume that you didn't do any research, are not really interested in the company, don't know what is important to you in an employee/employer relationship, or you lack confidence/assertiveness.

If appropriate, acknowledge that the interviewer has provided a good deal of information during the interview, and ask questions to clarify your understanding. For example, you may want to ask about:

- organizational goals and objectives
- major challenges facing the company
- working conditions
- number of people you would be working with or supervising
- reporting relationships
- travel requirements, if any
- what management values and looks for in employees
- the organization's policies regarding continuing education and career development
- opportunities for advancement.

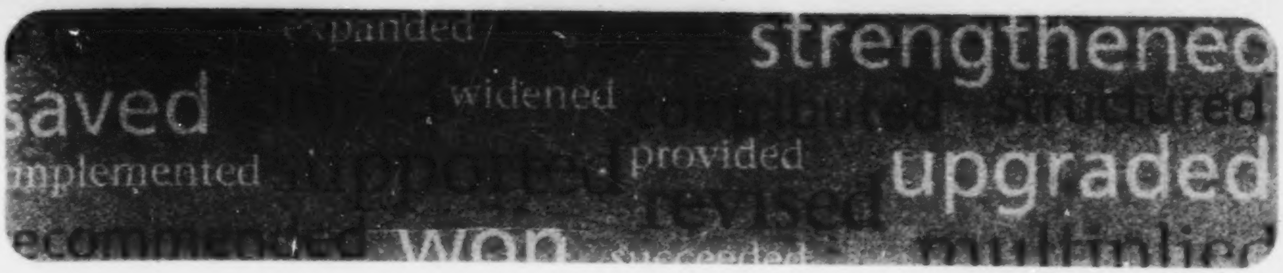
Questions about salary, vacation, benefits and hours of work should be left until after you receive a job offer.

In a highly structured interview, you may not have an opportunity to ask questions until near the end of the interview. It's O.K. to bring a list of prepared questions with you, and/or jot down questions that occur to you during the interview. However, be sure to explain that you are taking notes so you won't forget to ask important questions. When you are given the opportunity, quickly review your list and ask any questions that have not already been answered.

If you have researched the job so well you don't have any questions (or you just can't think of any), you might say something like the following.

- "Well, I did have a few questions before I came in, but you have covered them all during the interview."
- "No, actually between the research I did beforehand and the helpful information you have provided today, I think I have a pretty good sense of the company, the job and your expectations. And I'm even more convinced I'm the person for the job!"

As well as asking questions, pay attention to other people's body language and the interviewer's communication skills and management style. Observe employees in the elevator, halls and the reception area. Do they look energetic, motivated and respectful? Would you like to work with these people? If not, that is something you should seriously consider if you receive a job offer.



A question of human rights

Human rights legislation is relatively new. Some employers may not be well informed, and ask inappropriate questions. Be prepared for this possibility, so you are not caught off guard in an interview. For example, think about how you would respond to a question such as "How many children do you have?" You could:

- refuse to answer the question (e.g. politely point out that the number of children you have has no bearing on your ability to do the job).
- answer the question and go on to answer the underlying question/concern as well (e.g. assure the employer that you will not be asking for parental leave in the near future, or have to miss work when your children are sick).
- answer only the underlying question/concern (e.g. talk about your excellent attendance record).

However you decide to answer, be as tactful and diplomatic as you can.

Another possibility to consider is that negative stereotypes (about people of your gender, age, race, religion, ethnic background, etc.) could influence how employers perceive you. For example, what common beliefs about people in your occupation or people who look like you do might lead the employer to think you would not be an ideal candidate? What evidence can you provide to convince employers that you do not fit those stereotypes?

Interviewers will rarely acknowledge their prejudices, so you have to take the initiative. For example, an interviewer may see people who have grey hair as:

- unable or unwilling to get along with younger workers or customers
- slow to learn new things and/or forgetful
- a greater risk for poor attendance due to ill health
- not really interested in working hard because they will be eligible to retire soon.

If you are of a mature age, look for opportunities to point out that you expect to continue working for a number of years because you are still healthy and energetic, enjoy learning new things, and have friends and associates of all ages. Provide evidence that you are reliable, dependable and hard working. Talk about the advantages of hiring an older, more experienced worker (e.g. older workers bring balance, stability and maturity to team situations).

What negative stereotypes or assumptions might affect how employers perceive you?

☐ too young
☐ too old
☐ different culture or ethnic background
☐ overweight
☐ married and have young children
☐ single
☐ wrong gender (i.e. they'd prefer to hire a person of the opposite sex)
☐ don't speak English fluently
☐ don't understand English well
☐ have a disability
☐ have a criminal record
☐ have had an attendance problem recently
☐ lost your last job
☐ overqualified
☐ other specify: ______________________________

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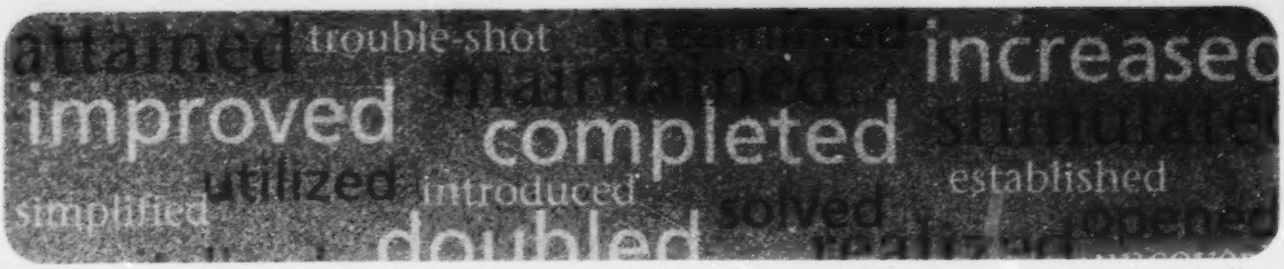


What can you say to prospective employers to show you don't fit the stereotype?

Managing Interview Anxiety

Don't assume that interviewers have all the power in interview situations and you must blindly follow their lead. Before each interview, prepare an agenda of your own by developing a clear idea of what you want to say and learn.

To plan your agenda, consider the following questions.

- What relevant knowledge, skills and abilities do you have to offer?
- How does your education and experience relate to the employer's needs?
- How well do the demands of the job and the nature of the organization meet your needs and wants?
- What track record do you have in achieving results, contributing to successful outcomes, and enhancing group effectiveness?

Writing out your answers to these questions will significantly increase your potential for success. You will be clear about your purpose and therefore more confident.

Following are more tips for managing interview anxiety.

- Visualize yourself in the interview. Form a mental picture of who is in the room. See yourself looking poised, confident and relaxed, responding to questions with ease. Observe the positive reaction of the interviewers. This will help to reduce fear of the unknown, and minimize negative thoughts and expectations.
- Just before going into an interview, practise deep breathing to slow your heart rate and calm yourself so you can concentrate on what you want to say. With feet flat on the floor and head erect, sit up straight, take in a deep breath, and very slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat two or three times.
- While deep breathing or immediately after, use positive affirmations such as the following to maintain a positive, upbeat attitude.

  I am relaxed and confident.

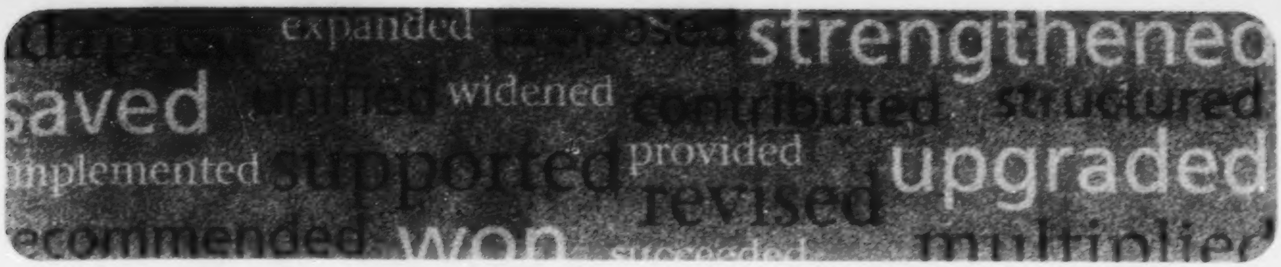
  I can handle anything that comes up in the interview.

  I am a good communicator.

  I am an ideal candidate for the job.

  I have a great deal to offer this company.

  I am prepared.
- Review and reaffirm several specific strengths you bring to the job.

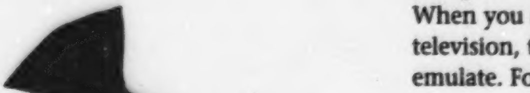


Your Physical Presentation

Before you open your mouth, your physical presentation (clothing, grooming, posture, facial expression, eye contact, handshake) will create an impact. In fact, researchers have found that physical presentation is responsible for 55 per cent of the impression a job seeker makes. Voice (tone, pitch, speed of speech) accounts for another 38 per cent. The actual words spoken are responsible for only seven per cent!

Research also indicates that the decision to reject an applicant is made within the first three minutes. **You won't get a second chance to create a good first impression.**

When you are researching an employer, find out how people in the organization usually dress. In particular, pay attention to the people who will be interviewing you and who do the type of work you want. Every organization has a slightly different organizational culture. For men, a shirt and tie with slacks and a co-ordinated sport jacket may be very appropriate in one organization, but not in a more formal, image-conscious company in which staff members are expected to wear suits.



Your choice of style, colour and fabric will affect how you are assessed for suitability. In general, be conservative. Use discretion with perfume, jewellery, makeup, shoes and other accessories. Solid colours tend to be better than busy, bold prints for a job interview. When in doubt, ask trusted friends, work colleagues or mentors for advice.

Once you have the right look, make sure your body language supports a professional image too. Non-verbal communication speaks louder than words.

VIDEO

Revisit the video where Frank, Azim and Lesley are role playing. Observe their body language. What do you think works for and against them?

As part of your preparation, pay attention to how you interpret and react to other people's body language. When you are watching people in person or on television, take note of behaviours you would like to emulate. Following are some general tips.

- Keep your head, shoulders and back erect. Walk with a sense of purpose. Communicate energy and confidence in the way you walk. If you don't actually feel confident, pretending you do will have a positive influence on your body language.
- Show friendliness, interest and confidence in your facial expression. Smile and make direct eye contact. Lack of eye contact is often interpreted in Canada as lack of honesty or lack of confidence. Anticipate how an interviewer might interpret your mannerisms, and ensure that your body is saying what you want to communicate.
- Learn how to shake hands if this skill isn't already a part of your social behaviour. Take the initiative and extend your hand without waiting for the interviewer to offer his/hers. It shows confidence. There is a bonding

attained
trouble-shot
increased
improved
maintained
completed
established
utilized
introduced
simplified
solved
opened
doubled

and breaking down of barriers that occurs when we touch physically with a professional, friendly handshake.

- In the interview, sit up straight and comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands/arms in your lap or on the arms of your chair. This is an open position. It says that you are relaxed, confident and comfortable. If your hands or arms are crossed over your chest or stomach, you may be seen as defensive, hostile or closed-minded.
- Lean forward slightly to show interest.
- Use appropriate hand and arm gestures to add emphasis and credibility to what you are saying. But don't overdo your gestures.
- If you have a tendency to wiggle, fidget or play with anything you have in your hands, be aware of that tendency and stop yourself. Practise and get feedback from a friend.
- If you are seated too far away or too close, or it is difficult to make eye contact with everyone on an interview panel, take the initiative and move your chair.

What did you like about Azim's, Frank's and Lesley's role-play presentations? How might they improve?

VIDEO

Observe the effect other people's voices have on you. What is it about the tone, speed and pitch of someone's voice that is or is not appealing? Notice the characteristics you attribute to people based on their voices.

Job applicants have been rejected because they have whiny, squeaky voices or they speak too quietly. Unless you have a disability related to your vocal chords, you have the power to change the way you use your voice. Get some feedback from trusted friends or family members about how you sound. Ask people who will be honest with you about what you need to do to communicate more effectively.

Learning from Rejection

It's not uncommon to feel rejected at some point in the search for work. But highly successful work searchers don't let rejection erode their confidence. They take positive, appropriate action to learn from the experience. For example, they may change their work search strategies (e.g. rework their résumé or kick their networking activities into high gear). If they are not sure what they should change, they look for ways to gather feedback. They may:

- ask friends and relatives for feedback about their marketing tools
- talk to an employment counsellor or career advisor
- follow up with employers who selected someone else.

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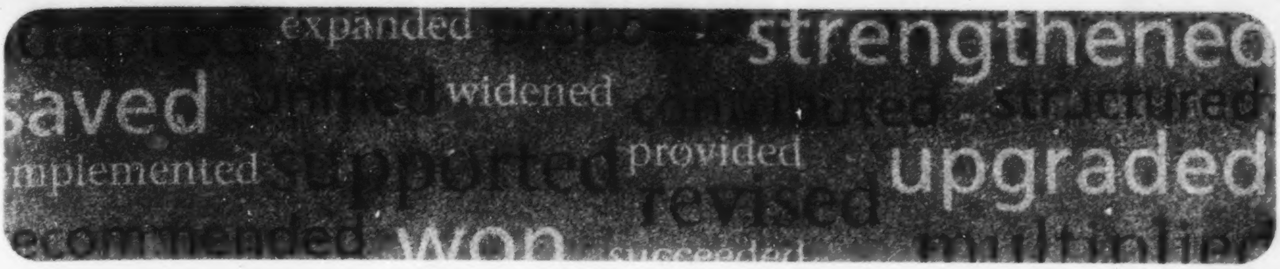

Following up with employers can provide useful information about the current labour market, your competition, the employer's needs, and/or your interview skills. Be sure to phrase your request for feedback so employers understand that you are not asking them to defend their decisions. Ask if they would be willing to comment on things that you did effectively. Then, ask if they would be willing to comment on things that might improve your performance in future interviews.

If your approach is professional and non-confrontational, employers may be willing to provide feedback about your interview performance. Listen carefully to what they say and remain as objective as you can – what you learn could greatly improve your chances of success next time. If you don't agree, maintain your composure and don't argue. Remember, you are still being evaluated and you want to leave a favourable impression. Graciously thank interviewers for their feedback and, if appropriate, reinforce your interest in employment with the organization.

Employers often find it difficult to select one person from among several well qualified applicants. When interviewers can't really define why they think someone else will fit in and meet the organization's needs better, accept their assessment and move on with your work search.

Negotiating Job Offers

When someone offers you a job, it is tempting to jump and shout YES. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. But hold on. It is important to discuss terms and conditions of employment (hours, salary, benefits) with the employer **before** you accept the offer.

If you are seriously considering accepting the job, listen carefully to the offer. Make sure you understand what would be expected of you (e.g. travel, shift work, overtime, supplying your own transportation) and the terms of employment (e.g. salary, vacation, health care and dental benefits). If the terms and conditions are not what you were expecting, ask if there is room to negotiate. For example, you may be able to negotiate an extra week of holiday time, a pay raise at an earlier date than is customary, or a parking stall.

If you decide to accept a job offer, wrap up your work search by letting employers and networking contacts know that you have a new job. Then celebrate with the people who have been most helpful!

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website

www.alis.gov.ab.ca

Alberta's leading on-line source for career, learning and employment information. Here you will find the resources you need for making the most of your future.

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Call the Hotline for answers to your questions about:

- career planning
- occupations
- job search skills
- education options
- information and referrals

Phone: 1-800-661-3753 toll-free in Alberta
Phone: 422-4266 in Edmonton

Hearing impaired access, phone: 1-800-232-7215 for message relay service or 422-5283 for TDD service in Edmonton.

E-mail: info@alis.gov.ab.ca
Website: www.alis.gov.ab.ca/hotline

Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres

Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres are located throughout the province. They have information on occupations, career options, education programs and funding, and finding work. Many offices have a career resource centre with books, newspapers, magazines, software and audio/visual materials. They may have computers for Internet use and word processing, and phones and fax machines to use for your work search. You can also talk to a career consultant. These services may be offered by other agencies in your community. Call the Career Information Hotline for the service centre closest to you.

Employment Standards

Phone: (780) 427-3731 or toll-free in Alberta,
dial 310-0000 and then 427-3731
Website: www.gov.ab.ca/hre/employmentstandards

Employment standards are minimum standards of employment for employers and employees in the workplace. You can get a free copy of the *Employment Standards Guide* by phoning the office or downloading it from the website.

Workplace Health and Safety

Phone: 1-866-415-8690
Website: www.whs.gov.ab.ca

Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S) helps employers and workers ensure safe, healthy and productive workplaces in Alberta. More than 200 free publications on safety are available on the website or by phone request. You can also phone for confidential advice.

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Advanced Techniques for Work Search

Date: ______

Did you find the information in this publication useful? In what way?

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How could we improve it?

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Do you have any suggestions for other products that would be of value to you?

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Alberta Human Resources and Employment
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T5K 2V1
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